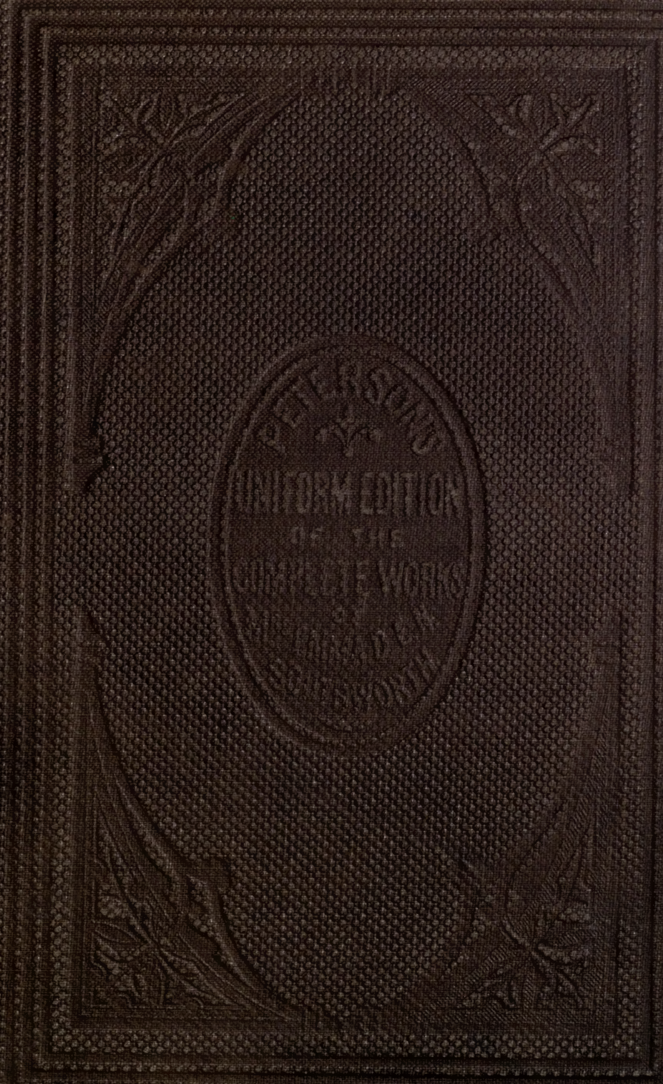

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OF THE

COMPLETE WORKS

OF

MRS. EMMA D. E. N.

SOUTHWORTH

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Harry M. Jones.
Ravenswood.
Long Island

THE MISSING BRIDE;

OR,

MIRIAM, THE AVENGER.

BY

MRS. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

AUTHOR OF "THE LOST HEIRESS," "THE WIFE'S VICTORY," ETC.

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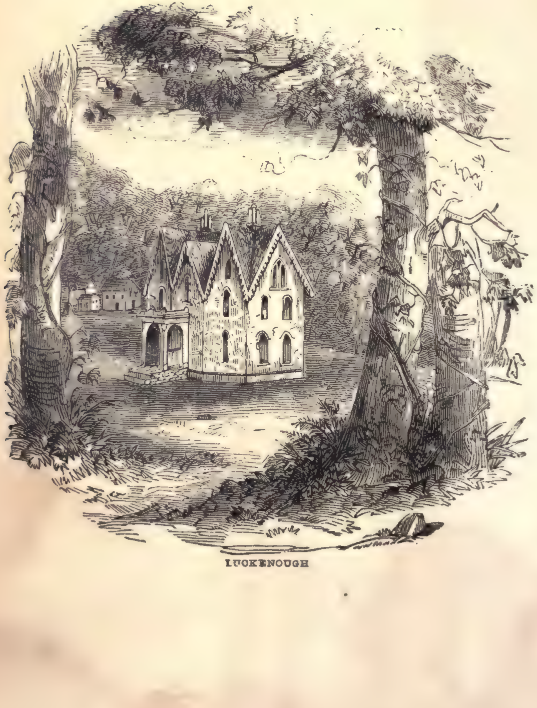
Published and for Sale by T. B. PETERSON,
No. 102 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.



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A dancing Shape—an Image gay
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.
* * * * *
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveler between life and death,
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.—WORDSWORTH.

Philadelphia:
T. B. PETERSON AND BROTHERS,
306 CHESTNUT STREET.

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TO

MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS,

AUTHOR OF "FASHION AND FAMINE,"

This Book is Inscribed,

WITH THE LOVE AND ADMIRATION OF

EDEN SOUTHWORTH.

PROSPECT COTTAGE,
May 19*th*, 1855.

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THE MISSING BRIDE.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

LUCKENOUGH.

"A jolly place, 'twas said, in days of old."—*Wordsworth.*

DEEP, in the primeval forest of St. Mary's, lying between the Patuxent and the Wicomico rivers, stands the ancient manor house of Luckenough.

The traditions of the neighborhood assert the origin of the manor, and its quaint, happy, and not unmusical name to have been—briefly *this*—

—That the founder of Luckenough was Alexander Kalouga, a Polish soldier of fortune, some time in the service of Cecilius Calvert, Baron of Baltimore, first Lord Proprietary of Maryland. This man had, previous to his final emigration to the New World, passed through a life of the most wonderful vicissitudes—wonderful even for those days of romance and adventure. It was said that he was born in one quarter of the globe, educated in another, initiated into warfare in the third, and buried in the fourth. In his boyhood he was the friend and pupil of Guy Fawkes, he engaged in the gunpowder plot, and after witnessing the terrible fate of his master, he escaped to Spanish America, where he led, for years, a sort of buccaneer life. He afterwards returned to Europe, and then followed years of military service wherever his hireling sword was needed. But the soldier of fortune was ill-paid by his mistress. His misfortunes were as proverbial as his bravery, or as his energetic complaints of "ill luck" could make them. He had drawn his sword in almost every quarrel of his time, on every battle field in Europe, to find himself, at the end of his military career, no richer than he was at its beginning—save in wounds and scars, honor and glory, and a wife and son. It was at this point of his life that he met with Leonard Calvert, and embarked with him for Maryland, where he afterwards received from the Lord Proprietary the grant of the manor "aforesaid." It is stated that when the old soldier went with some companions to take a look at his new possessions, he was so pleased with the beauty, grandeur, richness and promise of the place, that a glad smile broke over his dark, storm-beaten, battle-scarred face, and he remained still "smiling as in delighted visions," until one of his friends spoke, and said,

"Well, comrade! Is this *luck enough?*"

"Yaw, mine frient!" answered the new lord of the manor, in his broken English, cordially grasping the hand of his companion, "dish ish *loke enough!*"

Different constructions have been put upon this simple answer—first, that Lukkinnuf was the original Indian name of the tract; secondly, that Alexander Kalouga christened his manor in honor of Löekenoff, the native village of his wife, the heroic Marie Zelenski, the companion of all his campaigns and voyages, and the first lady of his manor; thirdly, that the grateful and happy soldier had only meant to express his perfect satisfaction with his fortune, and to say,

"Yes, this is luck enough! luck enough to repay me for all the past!"

Be it as it may, from time immemorial the place has *been* "Luckenough."

The manor comprises several hundred acres of cleared land, and a considerable portion of the surrounding forest.

Of the magnificence of that old forest, of the gigantic growth of its timber, the fabulous size of some of its trees, the hoary grandeur of its rocks, the lovely beauty of its rivulets, the mystic depth of its caverns, the impenetrable labyrinths of its thickets, where never a human foot fell, of the luxuriant exuberance of happy animal life, flourishing, increasing, and enjoying existence undisturbed by man—of all these bewildering glories of nature in the old forest, it is pleasanter to dream than to tell. No poet or artist ever trod those solitudes, or he would have been bewildered with the richness of the subject.

Deep soiled, heavily wooded, and well watered, the manor of Luckenough is one of the richest in old Maryland. Shut in by the encompassing forest, and approachable only by the worst of roads, it is completely isolated from the neighboring plantations.

As you enter upon the manor by one of these roads—after passing here and there several broad fields of wheat, tobacco, and corn, situated in the occasional clearings—you finally emerge from the forest and find yourself in a comparatively open space, and before a collection of massive buildings of dark, red color, irregular in form and size, and thickly interspersed and overshadowed with titanic oak and elm trees. The place looks like a woodland village charmed into repose—it *is* the group of the manor-house, offices, barns, granaries, stables, and negro quarters of Luckenough. In the background, and all around, you see the encompassing forest again. There are orchards and gardens and broad fields of grain behind, such as you passed in coming, but they are so hidden by the many intervening trees, that you can only catch an occasional glimpse of them to assure you that it is not in Arcadia, or before a castle of Indolence, but upon a Maryland plantation, that you stand. There is no conservatory and no flower garden near the house. The shade is too thick there for anything but grass to thrive.

You enter the lawn by a massive but decayed gate on the right, and go around a shaded semi-circular avenue that leads you up in front of the mansion.

A charmed air of stillness and silence pervades the place, for the negroes are all absent in the fields, the master is asleep over last month's newspaper, and the mistress is with her maids in the back spinning-room. The house fronts north; it is built of the darkest red bricks, and is three stories high, with a very steep roof, broken into three gables front and back, and one at each end—an old fashioned, fantastical style of architecture highly favorable to leakages, as the attic and the upper chambers of Luckenough can testify. The three front gables are perforated by three dormer windows, under which come, in a perpendicular line, the windows of the lower stories. The central gable is the smallest, though its row of windows is the largest, for they light the spacious passages, that on every floor run through the house from front to back, dividing the east from the west chambers. The principal entrance occupies the centre of the front of the house. Above it is a stone scroll, built into the wall, and bearing in old English characters, half effaced, this inscription—"A. K. 1644. Will is Fate." By which you may know that at this time the old house has stood the storms of two hundred winters. The portico is more modern and ruder than any part of the building, in fact it is quite unworthy the old mansion, being nothing more than a rough oak porch put up by a country carpenter, to replace the old one, and shade the front door. You ascend by a few rough steps, and stand upon the threshold. And there you may well pause, for the door is wide open, and there is no servant in attendance.

It is a wide passage that you see before you, with a door open at the farther end, through which you notice the back lawn, with linen bleaching on the grass, and trees, and a part of the garden fence. The hall is flanked each side by doors leading into various apartments, and the left of the centre is occupied by the staircase. Placed against the wall, in a line with the foot of the staircase, is a painted wooden settee, and there, sound asleep, this summer day, is the master; the old yellow newspaper he has just been reading, laid over his head. The powerful draught of air drawn by the opposite open doors flutters the paper upon his face, but he does not wake. A lazy black and white mastiff lying at full length under the settee crawls out and snuffs at you, and having satisfied himself by the smell that you are an honest stranger, if not an acquaintance, he goes and lies down again, and the stillness remains unbroken. Yet, if you like, you need not fear to break the spell of silence by waking the thunders of that old brass griffin that forms the knocker of the open door, for were you a traveling wooden nutmeg vender, lecturer, pedlar, or any other sort of peripatetic nuisance, you would still be a welcome and an honored guest at Luckenough, for everything is welcome that breaks the dull monotony of still life—I had nearly said stagnant life—there.

So isolated, indeed, was the manor, that for generations the owners seemed to consider it the very centre of things created —the capital of civilization, and to sneer at all beyond the forest as mere "outside barbarians." I will not say but that they might admit the neighboring little port of B——, and the city of Baltimore, to be useful *appendages* to Luckenough —created for the convenience of the *masters* of Luckenough, seeing that they were necessary to the shipping and sale of tobacco, wheat and corn, the staple *productions* of Luckenough. Now if you ask whether the men of the family never were forced into the world of business, or if the youths never were sent to college, and so learned to modify the exaggerated exotism of their race, I answer *no*. The head of the family usually effected his sales and made his purchases through his B—— agent, a shrewd, long-headed trader, who did business with several important mercantile houses in Baltimore, and was little likely to cross the self-conceit of his most profitable patron. And as for the young men of the house they never went farther into the world for their education than the neighboring academy of C——, an old and well established classical and mathematical school, founded by the planters for the benefit of their sons—but not well calculated to prune the pride of the proudest among them—for even there the boys of Luckenough assumed to be lords paramount of their schoolmaster. And if any member of the family, by a rare chance, went upon his travels, he was sure to pass through the world the same self-centred, self-satisfied, isolated creature, and to return as he went, unimproved. The community around Luckenough certainly conspired to foster the haughtiness of that family. For in almost every country there is one great estate so pre-eminent in size, value and importance, as to be an enduring object of interest and speculation to the community, and to clothe its owner with rather an undue authority in all agricultural, commercial, political, and other questions of the neighborhood. And Luckenough and its proprietors had enjoyed this evil distinction since the days of its foundation.

A host of dependants—needy relations also, contributed to cultivate this spirit of self-importance in the head of the house. And never was Irish tribe more prolific, or Scotch clan more united, as a family. It had been the custom of the masters of Luckenough, from the time of its ambitious founder, to bequeath the undivided landed estate to the eldest son—or failing sons—to the eldest daughter—and to portion off the other children with moderate legacies of money or personal property, sufficient, had they been of an industrious, frugal, and enterprising race—to start them fairly in life; but being what they were—proud, indolent and hopeless, it was not always enough to keep them in decent poverty. Hence the purse of the proprietor of Luckenough was often called into requisition, and never in vain, for any expense would have been readily met by the head of the family, rather than the mortification of seeing one of its members in the poor house or the prison.

So generation after generation vegetated the dull family of Luckenough—every son more hopelessly thick-headed and self-satisfied than his father before him, and *living on because they had not life enough to die*—or in other words, lasting because the calm, depressed tone of their constitutions and conditions never at any time made draft enough upon the vital powers, to weaken or exhaust them. Thus year after year vegetated on the dull family of Luckenough, until in the fullness of time, in the year of grace 1814, the stagnant pool of their existence was stirred by "something different from the wing of a descending angel," and the dull monotony of its history was developed into a startling romance—the first chapter of which is the chapter next succeeding.

CHAPTER II.

THE FLIGHT.

> "Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
> And mounting in hot haste!"—*Byron.*

THE owner of Luckenough at this time was Commodore Nickolas Waugh, who inherited the property in right of his mother, the only child and heiress of Peter Kalouga.

This man had the constitution and character, not of his mother's, but of his father's family—a hardy, rigorous, energetic Montgomery race, full of fire, spirit and enterprise. At the age of twelve, Nickolas lost his father.

At fifteen, he began to weary of the tedium of Luckenough, varied only by the restraint of the academy during term. And at sixteen he rebelled against the rule of his indolent lymphatic mamma, broke through the reins of domestic government, escaped to Baltimore, and shipped as cabin boy in a merchantman.

I said that he inherited the constitution of his father's family; yet one might fancy by his career from the time of his taking to the sea, that the spirit of old Alexander Kalouga had revisited the earth in the form of a descendant.

Nickolas Waugh went through many adventures, served on board merchantmen, privateers, and haply pirates too, sailed to every part of the known world, and led a wild, reckless and sinful life, until the breaking out of the Revolutionary War, when he took service with Paul Jones, the American Sea King, and turned the brighter part of his character up to the light. He performed miracles of valor—achieved for himself a name and a post-captain's rank in the infant navy, and finally was permitted to retire with a bullet lodged under his shoulder blade, a piece of silver trepanned in the top of his skull, a deep sword-cut across his face from the right temple over his nose to the left cheek—and with the honorary title of Commodore.

He was a perfect beauty about this time, no doubt, but that did not prevent him from receiving the hand of his cousin, Henrietta Kalouga, who had waited for him many a weary year.

No children blessed his late marriage, and as year after year passed, until himself and his wife were well stricken in years people, who never lost interest in the great estate, began to wonder to which among his tribe of impoverished relations, Nickolas Waugh would bequeath the manor of Luckenough.

His choice fell at length upon his orphan grand-niece, the beautiful Edith Lance, whom he took from the Catholic Orphan Asylum, where she had found refuge since the death of her parents, and placed in one of the best Convent schools in the south.

At the age of seventeen, Edith was brought home from school, and established, at Luckenough, as the adopted daughter and acknowledged heiress of her uncle.

Delicate, dreamy and retiring, and tinged with a certain pensiveness, the effect of too much early sorrow and seclusion upon a very sensitive temperament, Edith better loved the solitude of the grand old forest of St. Mary's, or the loneliness of her own shaded rooms at Luckenough, than any society the humdrum neighborhood could offer her. And when at the call of social duty she did go into company, she exercised a refining and subduing influence, involuntary as it was potent.

There was one social amusement, however, that Edith really did like to favor. That was the annual ball at the C—— academy, given by the students at the commencement. and patronized by their sisters, cousins, and young friends, male and female! These were rather juvenile parties, though parents, guardians and the professors attended, to give the sanction of their presence.

Edith was the star of these assemblies, and the queen of every mother's darling there. All the students worshipped her with that pure, passionate enthusiasm that only school boys or poets know and feel. And Edith—I know not what harsh usage during her orphanage had given her a shy heart towards her elders and equal in age, but Edith preferred the society of those younger than herself, and she liked the frank, warm-hearted college lads, as if they had been her brothers. And if there were "bad boys" among them, she did not find it out, for such never came within her sphere, or if by chance any did, they became ameliorated.

Edith's nature and the style of her beauty was very refined. Her form was of medium size and perfect symmetery. Her beautiful head sat upon her falling shoulders. Her complexion was of the purest semi-transparent fairness seen in the white sea-shell. Her forehead was shaded by fine, silky, black ringlets, so light as to be lifted by every breeze, and throw wavering soft shadows upon her pearly cheeks. Her eyes were long-shaped, dark, veiled and drooping—her countenance the most dreamy and spiritual you ever saw. Her beautiful bust was daintily curved, and her graceful limbs delicately rounded and tapering. Her hands and feet were perfect. She affected the beholder with the idea of extreme delicacy, sensitiveness and refinement.

Yet in that lovely, fragile form, in that dreaming, poetical soul, lay, undeveloped, a latent power of heroism, soon to be aroused into action. "Darling of all hearts and eyes," Edith had been at home a year when the war of 1812 broke out.

Maryland, as usual, contributed her large proportion of volunteers to the defence of the country. All men capable of bearing arms, rapidly mustered into companies, and hastened to put themselves at the disposal of the government.

The lower counties of Maryland were left comparatively unprotected. Old men, women, children and negroes were all that remained in charge of the farms and plantations. Yet remote from the scenes of conflict, and hitherto undisturbed by the convulsions of the great world, they reposed in fancied safety, and never thought of such unprecedented misfortune as the evils of the war penetrating to their quiet homes.

But their rest of security was broken by a tremendous shock. The British fleet, under Admiral Sir A. Cochrane, suddenly entered the Chesapeake. And the quiet, lonely shores of the bay became the scene of a warfare scarcely paralleled in atrocity in ancient or modern times. Its defenceless villages and hamlets were suddenly run down upon, sacked, burned to the ground, and the unresisting inhabitants put to the sword. Farms and plantations shared the same fate. Dwelling houses, barns and granaries were set on fire, and burned to ashes, and the owners and their families massacred in cold blood, and the negroes driven off at the point of the bayonet to the ships of the marauders, there to be drilled in military exercises and afterwards armed against their own masters. Everywhere the enemy tried to excite the slaves to revolt, and threatened to add the ghastly horrors of a servile insurrection to the accumulated evils of war. The most horrible crimes that ever blackened the souls of the most atrocious pirates, could not exceed in enormity the deeds done by these licensed buccaneers, under the guise of civilized warfare. It seemed as if in their case human nature had, with headlong recklessness, abandoned itself to the most violent and fiendish passions of cruelty, rapacity and sensuality.

If among this marauding band of licensed pirates and assassins there was one name more dreaded, more loathed and accursed than the rest, it was that of the brutal and ferocious *Thorg*—the frequent leader of foraging parties, the unsparing destroyer of womanhood, infancy and age, the jackal and purveyor of Admiral Cockburn. If anywhere there was a beautiful woman unprotected, or a rich plantation house ill-defended, this jackal was sure to scent out "the game" for his master, the lion. And many were the comely maidens and youthful wives seized and carried off by this monster.

The Patuxent and the Wicomico, with the coast between them, offered no strong temptation to a rapacious foe—and the inhabitants reposed in the fancied security of their isolation and unimportance. The business of life went on, faintly and sorrowfully, to be sure, but still went on. The village shops at B—— and C—— were kept open, though tended chiefly by women and boys. The academicians, at the little college, pursued their studies, or played at forming juvenile military companies. The farms and plantations were cultivated chiefly under the direction of ladies, whose husbands, sons and brothers were absent with the army. No one thought of danger to St. Mary's.

Most terrible was the awakening from this dream of safety, when, on the morning of the 17th of August, the division under the command of Admiral Cockburn—the most dreaded and abhorred of all—was seen to enter the mouth of the Patuxent in full sail for Benedict. Nearly all the able-bodied men were, as I said, absent with the army at the time when the combined military and naval forces, under Admiral Cockburn and General Ross, landed at that place. None remained to guard the homes, but aged men, women, infants and negroes. A universal panic seized the neighborhood, and nothing occurred to the defenceless people but instant flight. Females and children were hastily put into carriages, the most valuable items of plate or money hastily packed up, negroes mustered, and the whole caravan put upon a hurried march for Prince George's, Montgomery, or other upper counties of the state. With very few exceptions, the farms and plantations were evacuated, and left to the mercy of the invaders.

At sunrise, all was noise, bustle and confusion at Luckenough.

The lawn was filled with baggage wagons, horses, mules, cows, oxen, sheep, swine, baskets of poultry, barrels of provisions, boxes of property, and men and maid servants hurrying wildly about among them, carrying trunks and parcels, loading carts, tackling harness, marshaling cattle, and making other preparations for a rapid retreat towards Commodore Waugh's patrimonial estate in Montgomery county.

In the hall at Luckenough, the master strode up and down among corded trunks, and yelping dogs, and hurrying servants. He was a man of powerful size and weight, and formidable presence. He forcibly reminded one of a huge bull-dog, or rather, of the animal after which it is named. His great grizzled head and beard, his enormous chest, huge, rounded shoulders, heavy limbs and measured tread, and a habit he had when vexed, of thrusting forward his head and bellowing forth a prolonged "Oh-h-h-h!" assuredly suggested the likeness. And as he strode up and down among his men, the old hall shook as at the tread of an elephant. Fierce shame had lent unusual energy to the old man's manner, and the transverse scar across his face glowed like a bar of red hot iron. Ill could the veteran of twenty battles brook this rapid retreat without even a meeting with the enemy. But well did the invalided soldier know that it would be sheer madness to remain and encounter the advancing army of the invaders. And so he strode up and down the hall, giving vent to his impatience by swearing at the terrified servants, and kicking the howling dogs.

In the midst of this the back parlor door opened, and the mistress of the house came out into the hall. She was a handsome woman for her age—really fifty—seeming forty—with a fair, fat person, brown hair and brown eyes, fine teeth, much displayed in her frequent smiles, and white, plump neck and arms, often half uncovered for coolness. Now, however, she wore a close-fitted Nankeen pelisse. A Leghorn bonnet and veil completed her dress for travelling. She had strong health, calm nerves, a phlegmatic constitution, and an even, contented, cheerful temper It was these things that gave her such influence over her more excitable and impulsive companion. She, with her serene temperament and easy disposition, received the occasional onslaughts of the old soldier's violence very much as our troops at New Orleans, with their bales of cotton and wool, received the British cannonading, and with very much the same good effect. And now as she came out into the hall, her presence acted like oil upon the waves—it calmed the commotion.

The old man turned towards her, and his countenance and his voice softened as he said—

"All ready so soon, Old Hen! But where is Edith?"

"I don't know. I thought she was here," said Mistress Henrietta.

"Here! no! and the sun half an hour high!" and the old man's voice began to rise with his temper, as he vociferated, loud enough to be heard at the remotest extremity of the house—"Edith! Edith! where are you, you hussy?"

"Here I am, uncle," said a calm, musical voice, and Edith came out from an adjoining room.

Her white, flowing wrapper, the slight, silky, black curls playing carelessly around the pearly forehead, the veiled and dreamy eyes, the abstracted look, and more than all, the little, red-bound volume she held in her hand, seemed so unready, so impractical, that it put the old soldier past all his patience.

"Now will you look at that girl! I say I want you all to look at her!" he exclaimed, turning around. "If upon this morning, also, she isn't poring over a book, when we are ready to start! What is it you have got there, minx?"

"Marmion, sir."

"*Marmion!* What in the fiend's name is *that?* Hand it here."

Edith obeyed, and without looking at the book, he took it, and hurled it out into the lawn, exclaiming—

"There! *Now* did you ever know me to break my word, hussy?"

"No, sir."

"Very well, then! go and get ready, and be sure if you are not here in ten minutes, we will set forward without you." And so saying, the old man set himself down upon the wooden settee, at the foot of the stairs, and took his watch out to note the time.

Edith disappeared into her chamber.

"I never saw such a wrong-headed, romantic fool! What will ever become of her? She'll come to a bad end, I'm afraid, with poring over the fetched books."

"Oh, poor thing! what can you expect? She's got no companions of her own age. She must amuse herself some way," said good Henrietta.

"Oh-h-h! companions of her own age!" roared the Commodore, "what does she want with companions of her own age—and why can't she amuse herself knitting stockings for the niggers, like you do? I'll take and marry her to Professor Grimm, that's what I'll do! And there'll be two book-worms to keep each other's company. I'll——Oh, here she comes!"

In half the specified time Edith returned, equipped for her journey, in her riding-dress and hat.

"I am ready, uncle," she said, as she stood drawing on her gloves.

"Well, then we'll set forward. I want to get as far as Horsehead this day, if possible. A d——d mean, miserable dog I am, to be sneaking away from the enemy," growled the veteran, to himself.

The doors opening into the hall were then locked.

Edith was placed upon her pony, and attended by her old maid Jenny, and her old groom Oliver.

Commodore and Mrs. Waugh entered the family carriage, which they pretty well filled up. Mrs. Waugh's woman sat upon the box behind, and the Commodore's man drove the coach.

And the whole family party set forward on their journey. They went in advance of the caravan, so as not to be hindered and inconvenienced by its slow and cumbrous movements. A ride of three miles through the old forest, brought them to the open, hilly country. Here the road forked. And here the family were to separate.

It had been arranged that, as Edith was too delicate to bear the forced march of days' and nights' continuance before they could reach Montgomery, she should proceed to Hay Hill, a plantation near the line of Charles county, owned by Colonel Fairlie, whose young daughter, Fanny, recently made a bride, had been the schoolmate of Edith.

Here, at the fork, the party halted to take leave.

Commodore Waugh called his niece to ride up to the carriage window, and gave her many messages for Colonel Fairlie, for Fanny, and for Fanny's young bridegroom, and many charges to be careful and prudent, and not to ride out unattended, &c.

And then he called up the two old negroes, and charged them to see their young mistress safely at Hay Hill, and then to return to Luckenough, and take care of the house and such things as were left behind, in case the British should *not* visit it, and to shut up the house after them in case they *should* come and rob it and leave it standing. Two wretched old negroes would be in little personal danger from the soldiers.

So argued Commodore Waugh, as he took leave of them, and gave orders for the carriage to move on up the main branch of the road leading north, towards Prince George's and Montgomery.

But so argued *not* the poor old negroes, as they followed Edith up the west branch of the road that led to Charles county.

This pleasant road ran along the side of a purling brook, under the shadow of the great trees that skirted the forest, and Edith ambled leisurely along, low humming to herself some pretty song, or listening to the merry carols of the birds, or noticing the speckled fish that gamboled through the dark, glimmering stream, or reverting to the subject of her last reading.

But beneath all this childish play of fancy, one grave, sorrowful thought lay heavy upon Edith's tender heart. It was the thought of poor old Luckenough, "deserted at its utmost need," to the ravages of the foe. Edith might have been as wrong-headed and romantic as her uncle accused her of being; for now the old mansion, that her heart clung to so fondly, seemed to take a personal character, and in the dumb eloquence of its loneliness and desertion, to reproach her. She thought, too, of her own particular nook at Luckenough, of her cherished books and pictures and musical instruments, and little statuettes of saints and angels and heroes and heroines, of her vases and boxes and baskets, and pretty toys of all sorts, not one of which dreaming Edith had removed in her hasty departure. And she thought of all the dear old spots and places about the building that she loved so well—they seemed to her like members and features of some faithful friend, and she could not bear the thought of their destruction. Then came the question if it were not possible, in case of the house being attacked, to save it—even for *her* to save it. Edith's visionary head was full of stories of heroic women, who had wrought miracles in the way of saving or destroying castles and fortified towns, or in preserving the lives of fathers, brothers, husbands, and children. And she remembered no single instance in which a woman had lost life, limb or honor in such an attempt. Whatever other women or men either might suffer at the hands of the enemy, these heroic women always came through triumphantly—so Edith's reading showed, and she had no counter evidence. While these things were brewing in Edith's mind, she rode slowly and more slowly, until at length her pony stopped. Then she noticed, for the first time, the heavy, downcast looks of her attendants.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Oh! Miss Edith, don't ask me, honey—don't! Ain't we-dem got to go back to de house and stay dar by our two selves arter we see you safe?" said Jenny, crying.

"No! what? you two alone!" exclaimed Edith, looking from one to the other.

"Yes, Miss Edith, 'deed we has, chile—but you needn't look so 'stonish and 'mazed. You can't help of it, chile. An' if de British do come dar, and burn de house, and heave we-dem into de fire jes' out of wanton, it'll ony be two poor, ole, unvaluable niggers burned up. Ole marse know dat well enough—dat's de reason he resks *we.*"

"But for what purpose have you to return?" asked Edith, wondering.

"Oh! to feed de cattle and de poultry, and take care o' de things dat's lef' behine," sobbed Jenny, now completely broken down by her terrors. "I know—I jis does—how dem white niggers o' Co'bu'ns 'ill set de house o' fire, an' heave we-dem two poor old innocen's into de flames out'n pure debblish wanton!"

Edith passed her slender fingers through her curls, stringing them out as was her way when absent in thought. She was turning the whole matter over in her mind. *She* might possibly save the mansion, though these two old people were not likely to be able to do so—on the contrary, their ludicrous terrors would tend to stimulate the wanton cruelty of the marauders to destroy them with the house. Edith suddenly took her resolution, and turned her horse's head, directing her attendants to follow.

"But where are you going to go, Miss Edith?" asked her groom, Oliver, now speaking for the first time.

"Back to Luckenough."

"What for, Miss Edith, for goodness sake?"

"Back to Luckenough to guard the dear old house, and take care of you two."

"But oh, Miss Edy! Miss Edy! for Marster in Heaven's sake what'll 'come o' you?"

"What the Master in Heaven wills!"

"Lord, Lord, Miss Edy! ole marse 'ill kill we-dem. *What* 'ill ole marse say? What 'ill *everybody* say to a young gal a-doin' of anything like dat dar? Oh, dear! dear! what *will* everybody say?"

"They will say," said Edith; "if I meet the enemy and save the house—they will say that Edith Lance is a heroine, and her name will be probably preserved in the memory of the neighborhood. But if I fail and lose my life, they will say that Edith was a cracked brained girl who deserved her fate, and that they had always predicted she would come to a bad end."

"Better go on to Hay Hill, Miss Edy! 'Deed, 'fore marster, better go to Hay Hill."

"No," said the young girl, "my resolution is taken—we will return to Luckenough."

The arguments of the old negroes waxed fainter and fewer. They felt a vague but potent confidence in Edith and her abilities, and a sense of protection in her presence, from which they were loth to part.

The sun was high when they entered the forest shades again.

"See," said Edith to her companions, "everything is so fresh and beautiful and joyous here! I cannot even imagine danger."

They reached Luckenough before noontide, and the two old people, with their hearts very much lightened and cheered, and encouraged by the presence of their young mistress, busied themselves with opening the house and making her comfortable. Oliver put away the horses, and went to the spring for cold water, and to the mound for ice. And Jenny opened the shutters in the young lady's room, helped her off with her riding-dress, put it away, and went and prepared dinner. Edith went out to look for her lost volume of Marmion, found it in the grass, brought it in, and threw herself upon the sofa to finish the poem.

The summer day was so calm and cool, the forest home so silent and peaceful, Edith's own sensations so serene and sweet, that she did not realize the idea of danger. The day passed calmly and pleasantly.

But when the evening shadows begun to fall darkly around the old house, Edith's heart grew faint and oppressed with prophetic terrors.

Edith had acted suddenly, impulsively, from the warmth and generosity of her own heart; but had she done well and wisely?

This was the question she asked herself. Many an enthusiast, before our girl, has acted in haste to repent at leisure. Yet, as Edith looked upon the beloved old homestead that she was there to try to save from destruction, and upon the faithful old servants that seemed so confident of safety in her presence, and who were doing everything in their power to prove their gratitude and sense of her goodness, she could not repent at all. If the act were to do over again, she would do it.

After tea was over, Edith came out and sat upon the porch, to enjoy the coolness and quiet of the summer evening.

The old people, their day's work finished, came and sat upon the steps near her—they seemed to hover about her with a sense of security, as if she had been their guardian angel, or some superior being, capable of protecting them.

The sun had set. The last lingering light had faded from the west. There was no moon and the night would have been very dark but for the stars.

Still, everything was so beautiful, so peaceful, so fresh and pleasant! There was music in the ripple of the little forest stream, as it ran along singing to itself—music in the shiver of the dewy forest leaves, as they leaned, whispering sweet, solemn mysteries together—gladness in the merry chirp of insects waking to enjoy with them the coolness of the summer night—comfort and trust in the confidential twitter of little birds, murmuring to each other as they settled in their nests. All nature reposed or enjoyed itself, under the protection of the Great Father. And should not *they?* All things had faith—why should they doubt alone? And as the night advanced, the stars came out brighter and brighter. Before them, in the south, shone the great planet Jupiter, so strong as almost to cast a shadow. He stood looking down like the warden of the sky. And now, from the forest, came a cheerful sound above all other sounds. It was the hearty call of the whip-poor-will—the solitary bird that sat upon a branch of the old elm in the thicket near.

"I like the voice of the whip-poor-will, don't you?" asked Edith.

"Yes, indeed, Miss Edy, I likes everything that sounds pleasant to-night," replied Jenny.

"It seems so cordial and confident."

"So it do, Miss Edy! Whip-poor-will!—whip-poor-will! do soun' 'cisely like 'Keep-up-heart!' 'Keep-up-heart!'"

"Who ever would have thought you so fanciful, Jenny?"

"Me! Lor', Miss Edy, don't say *dat*, chile, please. I never was 'cuse o' bein' unsoun' in my brain-pan afore in all my days! But jes' look a dar, Miss Edy, at dat big star! Don't it seem like it wer' keepin' watch over we-dem? But, Lor'! *I'm* not afraid o' nothin'! 'Deed, *me!*——Oh! Lord Marster 'Deemer! what dat!" she broke off, in a sudden panic, as a crackling, crashing sound, and a rapid rush, came from the thicket.

"Why, it is nothing in the world but Lion, poor fellow! Here he comes!" said Edith, as a great black Newfoundland dog rushed towards them.

"I thought it wur a British. I wonder whar dem funnelly white niggers is now, an' what debiltry der up to!"

"Never mind them, Jenny. They are far enough from here, probably. I do not think it possible that they will ever penetrate through the forest to this secluded spot, or ever hear that such a place exists. Besides, look around you. How sweet and calm everything is here! The little birds in their nests fear no coming storm or stooping hawk—the tiny insects are singing their vesper hymns of thanksgiving in perfect sense of safety And why should we dread *our* foe? Are we not much more than they? Is not their Father ours? I cannot bring my reason to acknowledge that any scene of violence could, by possibility, be perpetrated here. Here is a holiness and peacefulness that seems to me would disarm even Cockburn's ruthless marauders!"

"*Dat* what you 'pend upon, Miss Edy? I lib in de hopes *dat* 'sperriment 'ill nebber be tried! But *I* ain't afraid! 'Deed *me!*"

Thus the mistress and maid sat and talked, to keep each other's courage up—the one asserting that there was no danger, the other protesting that she was not afraid—not she!

yet starting and turning gray at every sound. Old Oliver said little, but sat upon the lowest step caressing the dog. They sat out there a long time, for there was a sense of comparative freedom and safety felt by all out there in the open air, under the kindly stars, and among the other children of nature—and there was, among the three, an unspoken, unacknowledged dread of going in to shut themselves up in the great, dark, empty house.

But at length Edith thought it right and proper, and she arose to dismiss her attendants.

"Oh! Miss Edy! if you would please—if you would *please* to let we-dem sleep close by *your* room dis ebenin'!" pleaded Jenny.

"Certainly, if that will make your sleep the quieter," smiled Edith. "You may bring your mattrass, and lay it down by the side of my bed, and your brother Oliver may bring his, and lay it in the hall, just outside of my door, and I will only shut the door, not fasten it, if he is—if he would feel like he was forsaken—locked out."

"Hadn't we better call the dogs, and lock them inside the hall, Miss Edy?"

"Certainly not—they will be better guardians sleeping on the front porch."

These arrangements were finally concluded, and the front door was locked and barred, and the little family retired.

Poor Edith! No sooner did she find herself shut within the four walls of her chamber, than the hope, the trust, the confidence, the sense of safety, she had felt in the open air, began to abandon her—nor was she reassured by the words of Jenny, who said—

"Seems to me, Miss Edy, we-dem was better off out doors. Seems—ef it ar de Lord's will we *is* to be killed—better be shot running like a hare, dan be murdered, up here in dis close room, like a mouse in a trap!"

"Say your prayers, Jenny, and commit yourself to the care of Providence. Come here, and kneel down by me, and we'll pray together—I wish I had thought of it before Oliver bade us good-night, but he is fast asleep now, I believe."

"'Deed he! Snoring and snorting there like a grampus! Little 'fence he! ef de house was attack, de soldiers stumble right ober him, an' bust open your door, 'out eber wakin' of him!"

"There is 'an eye that never slumbers nor sleeps.' We will put ourselves under God's protection."

Edith kneeled down by the side of her bed—Jenny on her right hand—and never before had she committed herself and hers to heaven, with so much earnestness. Then she arose, and gave herself into the hands of Jenny, who began to undress her and prepare her for bed.

"You are so pale, Miss Edy! Won't you take something?"

"No—thank you, Jenny."

"But 'deed you trembles like a leaf, chile! Better let me get you some sperrits o' lavender confound."

"No, Jenny, no—I am a little nervous, but it will go off. Reason and religion both convince me that there is no danger. Happen what will, we must pass through it safe. We have put ourselves under the care of that Power 'whose loving kindness and tender mercies are over all His works.' We must remember, and trust in the protecting guardianship of Providence, Jenny."

"So I does, honey—'deed does *I*. I'm not afraid, nuther! —'deed *me!* Lord! Marster in heaven, what's dat!"

"A branch of the old elm, blown against the window, Jenny, that's all."

"I made *sure* it wur de British! But, honey, *hadn't* we better wake up brother Oliver, and make him keep watch all night?"

"No—surely, the poor old man could not keep awake."

"Jes as *you* say, Miss Edy. Lord Gemini! did you hear dat?"

"Yes—it is nothing but the rats in the wall—surely, you know *that* sound."

"So I does, on'y I'm allus lettin' of my 'stracted thoughts run on to dem riporates."

"There! say your prayers over again to yourself, Jenny, and go to sleep, and let me do the same."

"Sleep! You isn't a-gwine for to *sleep*, Miss Edy?"

"Yes, I hope so. Good-night," said Edith, getting into bed.

"But—You'll let the light burn, Miss Edy?"

"Yes! if it will do you any good. There—good-night!" said Edith, addressing herself to sleep.

It was some time before she was lost in slumber.

And then she was suddenly aroused by the voice of Jenny, calling—

"Miss Edith! Miss Edith! Oh! for de Lord's *sake*, wake up!"

"What's the matter!" exclaimed the young girl, starting up

"Jes listen! Jes you listen! Listen at dat der noise on t'other side o' de house!"

Edith listened.

"It is only the wind, Jenny, shaking the old shutters," said Edith, as she turned over, and tried to calm her somewhat excited nerves to rest. It was more difficult this time. But at length she fell into a disturbed sleep, from which she was again quickly startled by the sound of Jenny's voice, crying—

"Oh, Miss Edy! Miss Edy! for your *life!*—for your precious *life*, jump up!"

Again the poor girl sprang up—bathed in a cold perspiration, and quaking with terror.

"What is it, Jenny? Oh! Jenny, what is it?"

"The marowdies! the marowdies, Miss Edy! Oh! don't you hear them tramping all around the house?"

Edith sprang out of bed and went to a window, and listened breathlessly. The snort and tramping of a horse somewhat reassured her. She came back, saying,

"It is only some of our cattle, Jenny—our own familiar cows and horses, that have strayed into the yard."

"I would o' *swore* it was the British army!" said the old woman.

"Jenny, you really *must* govern your fears and quiet yourself! You have so harrassed and unnerved me, that if anything should really happen, I am unprepared for the exigency—unable to protect either you or myself!"

Old Jenny laid down and sobbed compunctiously—"I can't help of it! I hopes neber to see sich anoder night while eber I lib."

Edith returned to bed, and addressed herself once more to sleep. It was in vain—her nerves were fearfully excited. In vain she tried to combat her terrors—they completely overmastered her. In vain she recalled her own resolutions of fortitude and courage—in vain she summoned to her mind the examples of all the heroic women of history; her heart seemed fainting in her bosom with dread. This was partly to be attributed to Edith's delicate constitution. A heroic spirit requires a strong physical organization—or, in default of that, a powerful mental excitement to corroborate it. Edith had neither. And now that vivid imagination which had been in safety her greatest delight, now in peril became her most terrible scourge. It conjured up to her the scenes of violence of which her chamber might become the bloody stage. At length she was driven again to the foot of God's throne for mercy. She clasped her hands and prayed.

Ah! more than the recollection of all the examples of all the heroines of history, did this prayer calm and restore the perturbed mind of Edith. Repeating it, she sank into a deep, refreshing sleep, of several hours.

She was violently shocked out of it.

Old Jenny stood over her, lifting her up, shaking her, and shouting in her ears,

"Miss Edith! Miss Edith! it is no false 'larm *now!* They are here! they are here! We shall be murdered in our beds!"

Edith was wide awake in an instant—and very calm. The effect of her prayer had not left her.

It *was* no false alarm this time.

In the room stood old Oliver, gray with terror, while all the dogs on the premises were barking madly, and a noisy party at the front door was trying to force an entrance.

CHAPTER III.

THE ATTACK

"All that the mind would shrink from of excesses,
All that the body perpetrates of bad,
All that we read, hear, dream of man's distresses,
All that the devil would do if run stark mad,
All by which hell is peopled—or as sad
As that—mere mortals who their power abuse,
Was here—as heretofore and since—let loose."—*Byron.*

VIOLENT knocking and shaking at the outer door and the sound of voices.

"Open! open! let us in! for God's sake, let us in!"

"Those are fugitives—not foes—listen—they plead—they do not threaten—go and unbar the door, Oliver," said Edith.

Reluctantly and cautiously the old man obeyed.

"Light another candle, Jenny—that is dying in its socket—it will be out in a minute."

Trembling all over, Jenny essayed to do as she was bid, but only succeeded in putting out the expiring light. The sound of the unbarring of the door had deprived her of the last remnant of self-control. Edith struck a light, while the sound of footsteps and voices in the hall warned her that several persons had entered.

"It's Nell, and Liddy, and Sol, from Hay Hill! Oh, Miss Edy! Thorg and his men are up dar a 'stroyin' everything! Oh, Miss Edy! an' us thought it was so safe an' out'n de way up dar! Oh, what a 'scape! what a 'scape we-dem has had!"

"What! do I hear you right? Hay Hill attacked! Thorg there!" exclaimed Edith. Her light was now burning, and she looked wildly at the intruders. "Thorg! Thorg at Hay Hill! Impossible—!"

"Yes, Miss Edith, yes; Thorg cutting and slaying and slashing and burning, to his heart's content."

"Thorg at Hay Hill! Good heaven of heavens! and the family? and Fanny? Merciful God! Fanny?"

The three fugitives began at once, in a wild and hurried manner, to tell their story.

But Nell, with a wierd, commanding gesture, arrested the speech of the others, and came forward herself to tell the tale.

She was a wild, unearthly figure, as she stood there in the red glare of the candle, where all else around was in murky obscurity—a wierd figure, jet black—thin as a skeleton, and bent with age. A scant, red, linsey gown, short and sleeveless, exposed the long, skinny arms and legs, the wizened face was fearfully contrasted with the protruded and glaring eye-balls and gleaming fangs, and with the white, woolly hair, around which was twisted a sanguine red handkerchief. Her abrupt and angular gestures, her glaring eyes, her cat-like bounds and springs, gave a supernatural and witch-like aspect to the most frightful looking old hag you ever saw.

With many "starts and flaws," and staring of the wild orbs, and lifting of the skinny arm, she told the awful story, which—disentangled from her wild confusion of ideas—was this:

"That about eight o'clock on the evening before, the family of Colonel Fairlie, of Hay Hill, were assembled in the parlor for tea, and only waiting for the return of Mr. Laurie, the colonel's son-in-law, from Charlotte Hall, to sit down at table, when a large party of foragers, under Thorg, rode into the yard, dismounted, and entered the house, which they proceeded to sack. No resistance was made by the feeble household, where resistance would have been madness, as it would have been totally ineffectual, except in provoking the foe to greater violence. Only Colonel Fairlie endeavored to secure the safety of his daughter by flight and concealment. He seized her quickly, and, with what speed age could make, bore her off to a neighboring woods. But he was seen, pursued, overtaken, his child torn from his protecting bosom, and he himself put to the sword. Half an hour later Mr. Laurie returned to find his home a smoking heap of ruins, his father-in-law murdered, and his bride, half an idiot, in the arms of a rude soldier. To draw his pistol and shoot the man dead upon the spot was the work of a second. It was the first and last blood Henry Laurie ever shed. He was instantly surrounded, knocked down and bayoneted—absolutely impaled—pinned to the earth by the pikes of the soldiers. The negroes had fled, leaving Fanny in the hands of the drunken and demonized soldiery.

"The main army was supposed to be on the march northwards to Washington City. It was more than probable that they had overtaken the caravans of the retreating planters."

It is impossible to describe the effect of this story upon Edith. Horror, wonder, despair, seemed to confuse and paralyze her mind.

"Go," she said, abstractedly, mechanically. "Go, Jenny, take these poor creatures into the kitchen, and do what you can for them. I must consider what is best for us all."

Jenny and Oliver spoke to the half-crazed fugitives, and drew them away from the young lady's chamber.

And, left alone, Edith tried to collect her thoughts—to understand what had occurred, and to prepare for what might be to come.

What *had* occurred?

Hay Hill, thought so safe in its obscurity and unimportance—Hay Hill, the chosen place of refuge for herself—Hay Hill, attacked, sacked and burnt to the ground! The gray-haired Colonel Fairlie, and the gallant Harry Laurie, whom she had deemed so secure in their wisdom and valor—both massacred! The beauteous bride, Fanny, whose exceeding great happiness was lately the object of so much speculation, wonder, and almost envy to Edith—left to a fate too horrible to contemplate! Ah, Fanny! she had been the sybil and soothsayer in all the little gatherings of young people at her father's hospitable house—often prophecying from the palmistry she practised without believing—she had, with mock solemnity, predicted her own fate—her life short—her death sharp and sudden. And now, *now!*

It was strange how Edith remembered this prediction—attached to it—dependant on it—was a prophecy that concerned herself. But she could not think of self now. Her whole mind was absorbed with the thought of Fanny.

It was necessary, however, to arouse herself, to do something to prepare for what might happen.

And what was likely to happen?

Why, that ere the day was over the marauders would visit Luckenough.

And how should she meet them? The deep, tragic events occurring around her had exalted Edith's mind above the thought of self, or the fear of death—there was but one thing she feared above all others, to share Fanny's fate, to fall into the hands of the licentious soldiery. And this she resolved to forestall by providing herself with the means of instant death, to be used if the occasion demanded it.

This having been determined upon, Edith's mind grew calm.

She arose and opened the shutters to look out upon the night.

It was no longer night but morning. Day was dawning, and the east was tinged with the flush of the coming sun.

There is something always encouraging in the dawn of day and the rising of the sun. Edith's heavy heart grew less oppressed, its gloomy despair stole away with the shadows of the night—nothing could happen to herself but death, and death, even by her own hand, did not seem so horrible by daylight as it had seemed in the murky darkness of the night. Her faith in God and man—her faith in her own moral power—grew strong. She did not despair of saving Luckenough even now, even from such marauders as had laid waste Hay Hill and massacred its household. Edith began to dress herself While she was thus occupied, Jenny came into the room, bringing a cup of strong coffee.

"I thought I would bring it to you before break'as', Miss Edith, seein' how you was broke o' your res' las' night."

"Thank you, Jenny," said Edith, taking the cup and quaffing its contents, "but offer some to those poor creatures in the kitchen. They are more in need of it than I am."

"I 'tends for to do it, Miss Edith, but Cracked Nell, she's gone. I couldn't 'suade her to stay save my life."

"You ought to have stopped her, however, poor creature! for where could she go when every place is infested with these soldiers?"

"'Couldn's stop her for the soul of me, Miss Edith. She's jes' as crazy as a June-bug! an' de more you 'poses *sich* de wus dey gits!"

"But where has she gone? poor maniac!"

"She said how she had business o' 'portance some'ers else, at Charlotte Hall, I b'lieves, an' so she went."

"Well, poor creature, I hope her wretched life will be safe. You must go and attend to the others now. I shall not want anything more just yet."

After breakfast was over, and the morning work hastily dispatched, Oliver presented himself at his young mistress' bedroom door, and inquired if he had not better shut up and bar all the doors and windows.

"No, Oliver, no! there is not a door or window here that they would not *delight* to break open, and it would be but play for them to do it. No, we will not tempt and excite their anger by giving them anything to combat. I have a different policy. There are powers harder to overthrow than bars and bolts of iron and doors of oak—the spiritual influences that surround home, harmlessness, peacefulness, non-resistance! No, Oliver, bar and bolt no doors or windows, that would only provoke and accelerate the attack, and cause the ruin of our homestead. No, you will open wide the doors and windows, as our usual custom is in summer weather. Let nothing be changed from the usual routine. We must not look as if we dreamed of outrage. I shall sit here in the hall. Go bring my work-stand and chair and footstool hither, and set them near the front door."

Oliver did so.

"Now open the front door and the back door, and prop them open to let the breeze blow through as usual."

Oliver followed the directions of his mistress, and then stood, hat in hand, to receive farther orders, while Edith seated herself at her stand and began to arrange her sewing.

"Oliver," she said, "here is a little pocket pistol that belonged to my father. I kept it for his sake; it may do me good service in some extreme need; I wish you would look and tell me if it is in good order;" and she took the elegant little toy of death from her stand drawer, and handed it to her old servant. He looked at it with the eye of a connoisseur.

"It's a perfect beauty, Miss Edith. No, honey, nothing 'tall de matter of dis yer pistol."

"Have you any powder and shot, Oliver?"

"Some down at de quarter, honey."

"Go and get it then; I want you to load that pistol for me, and show me how to use it."

Oliver disappeared to do his mistress's bidding. He cleaned the little weapon, prepared it for her use, loaded and brought it to her, and showed her how to fire it off. He loaded and she fired it several times.

"There, Oliver, I think I can trust myself to use it now. Now load it well, Oliver; put in a small bullet, and give it to me."

Oliver did so, and Edith took the pistol and placed it in her work-stand drawer.

"Now, for Marster's sake, Miss Edy, what you gwine do 'long o' dat der little wiper-snake?" inquired Jenny, with a shudder, as she entered and saw the transaction.

"Only keep it by me, in case of emergency, Jenny. But I trust to have no occasion for its use. Jenny, get your yarn, your reel, and stool, and bring them here, and sit down with me at work. And, Oliver, keep about the front door here—not on guard but at work—get your wooden rake and be engaged in clearing up the dry leaves from the grass. We must not seem as if we expected a foe, or thought of violence. We must look home-like, peaceful, harmless, non-resistant—*doing* no wrong and *expecting* none. We must show no fear—make no opposition; and then I feel sure that though they may rob the house, they will leave it and its furniture uninjured, and ourselves entirely unmolested. This is the best—the *only* thing to do. For if we were even now to fly, we should be just as apt as not to fall into their hands—and if we should attempt to resist them, or to bar their entrance here, they would laugh our efforts to scorn, and never spare us. On the other hand, consider a party of foraging soldiers coming to a quiet country-house, and finding only a young woman engaged with her harmless sewing—and her two old servants at their peaceable domestic work—they would not be *able* to do them a personal wrong."

"But *Thorg!* Miss Edith! if *Thorg* should come!" said Jenny.

"Still, if you follow the policy I have pointed out, you and Oliver will be in no danger, even from Thorg."

"But you, Miss Edith! *you!*"

"I have my remedy at hand."

Cheered and fortified by Edith's courage and constancy, the old people arranged their morning's employment, as she had directed.

And thus the forenoon was passed.

Edith sat sewing at her work-stand—her heart filled with grief for the fate of her friend Fanny; with misgiving for the safety of her uncle's retreating caravan, and with dread of what might, the next hour, befall herself. But she governed and suppressed these forebodings, whose expression would only do harm. Her outward appearance was calm and brave, and she spoke only to encourage and fortify her two attendants.

Jenny sat near her mistress, reeling off yarn. And Oliver, with his wooden rake, cleared up the grass of the lawn.

Once Edith arose from her work to go into her own room and pray, for the failing heart to receive new strength. And those few moments of her absence were fraught with fate to Edith. As soon as she had disappeared and closed her chamber door after her, Jenny left her seat, stepped cautiously to the front door, and beckoned Oliver silently to approach. Oliver softly dropped his rake, and came stealing up the steps of the portico.

"Oliver, what you tink Miss Edy want long o' dat fernal wiper-snake of a little pistol you loden for she?"

"Why, to shoot Thorg with, ef how he should come."

"What a funnelly fool! What de use o' *she* shoot *he*, when der'd be twenty or thirty at his back to wenge him? No, taint to shoot no *Thorgs*, nor no *sich*—it's jes' to shoot *she herself*, afore she'll fall into any o' der funnelly wicked hands!"

"No! Lord! you don't tink so! She musn't do nuffin 'tall like dat *der*—'case allers when der's life der's hopes!" said the old man, in a low voice, as he crept stealthily to the stand-drawer and took out the pistol.

The old woman sat down to her reel, and reeled away as if nothing had happened.

What are you doing with *that*, Oliver?" asked Edith, unsuspiciously, as she re-entered the hall.

"Only 'suring of mysef how it's all right, Miss Edith," said the old man, with some nervous trepidation.

"And *is* it all right?"

"Yes, Miss Edith, thank Marster!" said the old creature, "with the sigh of a great deliverance," as he replaced the weapon in the stand-drawer, and turned to go about his business.

"I do not believe that we shall have occasion to use it, Oliver," said Edith, resuming her seat and her work. "Where are those poor souls from Hay Hill?" she asked, after a little pause, remembering the fugitives for the first time since breakfast.

"Soun' asleep, Miss Edith, down at my quarter—'deed dey is, chile, sleepin' like dead. I 'spose how dey was fleein' and 'fendin all night last, an' dey's perf'ly *'zausted.*"

That summer day was so holy in its beauty, so bright, so clear, so cool; that rural scene was so soothing in its influences, so calm, so fresh, so harmonious; it was almost impossible to associate with that lovely day and scene, thoughts of wrong and violence and cruelty. So felt Edith as she sometimes lifted her eyes from her work to the beauty and glory of nature around her. And if now her heart ached, it was more with grief for Fanny's fate than dread of her own. There comes, borne upon the breeze that lifts her dark tresses, and fans her pearly cheeks, the music of many rural voices—of rippling streams and rustling leaves and twittering birds and humming bees.

But mingled with these, at length, there comes to her attentive ear a sound, or the suspicion of a sound, of distant horse-hoofs falling upon the forest leaves—it draws nearer—it becomes distinct—she knows it now—it is—*it is* a troop of British soldiers approaching the house!

They rode in a totally undisciplined and disorderly manner; reeling in their saddles, drunken with debauchery, red-hot, reeking from some scene of fire and blood!

And in no condition to be operated upon by Edith's beautiful and holy influences.

They galloped into the yard—they galloped up to the house—their leader threw himself heavily from his horse and advanced to the door.

It was the terrible and remorseless Thorg! No one could doubt the identity for a single instant. The low, square-built, thick-set body, the huge head, the bull neck, heavy jowl, coarse sensual lips, bloodshot eyes, and fiery visage, surrounded with coarse red hair,—the whole brutalized, demonized aspect could belong to no monster in the universe but that *cross* between the fiend and the beast called THORG! And now he came, intoxicated, inflamed, burning with fierce passions from some fell scene of recent violence!

Pale as death, and nearly as calm, Edith awaited his coming. She could not hope to influence this man or his associates She knew her fate now—it was death!—death by her own hand, before that man's foot should profane her threshold! She knew her fate, and knowing it, grew calm and strong. There were no more hopes or fears or doubts or trepidations. Over the weakness of the flesh the spirit ruled victorious, and Edith stood revealed to herself richly endowed with that heroism she had so worshipped in others—in that supreme moment mistress of herself and of her fate. To die by her own hand! but not rashly—not till a trial should be made—not till the last moment. And how beautiful in this last fateful moment she looked! The death pallor had passed from her countenance—the summer breeze was lifting the light black curls—soft shadows were playing upon the pearly brow—a strange elevation irradiated her face, and it "shone as it had been the face of an angel."

"By George! boys, what a pretty wench!—Keep back, you d——d rascals!" (for the men nad dismounted and were pressing behind him,) "keep back, I say, you drunken ——! Let rank have precedence in *love* as in other things! Your turn may come afterwards! Ho! pretty mistress, has your larder the material to supply my men with a meal?"

Edith glanced around for her attendants. Jenny lay upon the hall floor, fallen forward upon her face, in a deep swoon. Oliver stood out upon the lawn, his teeth chattering, and his knees knocking together with terror, yet faintly meditating a desperate onslaught to the rescue with his wooden rake.

"No matter!" for first of all we must have a taste of those dainty lips; stand back, bl—t you," he vociferated with a volley of appalling oaths, that sent the disorderly men, who were again crowding behind him, back into the rear; "we would be alone, d—— you; do you hear?"

The drunken soldiers fell back, and he advanced towards Edith, who stood calm in desperate resolution. She raised her hand to supplicate or waive him off, he did not care which—her other hand, hanging down by her side, grasped the pistol, which she concealed in the folds of her dress.

"Hear me," she said, "one moment, I beseech you!"

The miscreant paused.

"Proceed, my beauty! Only don't let the grace before meat be too long."

"I am a soldier's child," said Edith; her sweet, clear voice slightly quavering like the strings of a lute over which the wind has passed; "I am a soldier's child—my father died gallantly on the field of battle. You are soldiers, and will not hurt a soldier's orphan daughter."

"Not for the universe, my angel; bl—t 'em! let any of 'em hurt a hair of your head! I only want to love you a little, my beauty! that's all!—only want to pet you to your heart's content;" and the brute made a step towards her.

"Hear me!" exclaimed Edith, raising her hand.

"Well, well, go on, my dear, only don't be too long—for my men want something to eat and drink, and I have sworn not to break my fast until I know the flavor of those ripe lips."

Edith's fingers closed convulsively upon the pistol still held hidden.

"I am alone and defenceless," she said; "I remained here, voluntarily, to protect our home, because I had faith in the better feelings of men when they should be appealed to. I had heard dreadful tales of the ravages of the enemy through neighboring sections of the country. I did not fully believe them. I thought them the exaggerations of terror, and knew how such stories grow in the telling. I could not credit the worst, believing, as I did, the British nation to be an upright and honorable enemy—British soldiers to be *men*—and British officers *gentlemen*. Sir, have I trusted in vain? Will you not let me and my old servants retire in peace? All that the cellars and storehouses of Luckenough contain, is at your disposal. You will leave myself and attendants unmolested. I have not trusted in the honor of British soldiers to my own destruction!"

"A pretty speech, my dear, and prettily spoken—but not half so persuasive as the sweet wench that uttered it," said Thorg, springing towards her.

Edith suddenly raised the pistol—an expression of deadly determination upon her face.

Thorg as suddenly fell back. He was an abominable coward in addition to his other qualities.

"Seize that girl! seize and disarm her! What mean you, rascals? are you to be foiled by a girl? Seize and disarm her, I say! are you *men*?"

Yes, they were *men*, and therefore, drunken and brutal as they were, they hesitated to close upon one helpless girl.

"H—l fire and furies! surround! disarm her, I say!" vociferated Thorg.

Edith stood, her hand still grasping the pistol—her other one raised in desperate entreaty.

"Oh! *one* moment! for heaven's sake, *one* moment! still hear me! I would not have fired upon your captain! Nor would I fire upon one of you, who close upon me only at your captain's order. There is something within me that shrinks from taking life! even the life of an enemy—*any* life but *my own*, and *that* only in such a desperate strait as *this*. Oh! by the mercy that is in *my own heart*, show mercy to *me!* You are men! you have mothers, or sisters, or wives, at home, whom you hope to meet again, when war and its insanities are over. Oh! for *their* sakes, show mercy to the defenceless girl who stands here in your power! Do not compel her to shed her own blood! for, sure as you advance *one step* towards me, I pull this trigger, and fall dead at your feet." And Edith raised the pistol and placed the muzzle to her own temple—her finger against the trigger.

The men stood still—the captain swore.

"H—l fire and flames! do you intend to stand there all day, to hear the wench declaim? Seize her, curse you! wrench that weapon from her hand."

"Not so quick as I can pull the trigger!" said Edith—her eyes blazing with the sense of having fate—the *worst* of fate in her own hands; it was but a pressure of the finger, to be made quick as lightning, and she was beyond their power! her finger was on the trigger—the muzzle of the pistol, a cold ring of steel pressed her burning temple! she felt it kindly—protective as a friend's kiss!

"Seize her! Seize her, curse you!" cried the brutal Thorg, "what care *I* whether she pull the trigger or not? Before the blood cools in her body, I will have had my satisfaction! Seize her, you infernal—"

"Captain, countermand your order! I *beg*, I *entreat* you, countermand your order! You yourself will greatly regret having given it, when you are calmer," said a young officer, riding hastily forward, and now, for the first time, taking a part in the scene.

An honorable youth in a band of licensed military marauders!

"'Sdeath, sir! don't interfere with *me!* Seize her, rascals!"

"One step more, and I pull the trigger!" said Edith.

"Captain Thorg! This *must* not be!" persisted the young officer.

"D—n, sir! do you oppose *me?* do you *dare?* Fall back, sir, I command you! Scoundrels! close upon that wench and bind her!"

"Captain Thorg! This SHALL NOT be? Do you hear? Do you understand! I say this violence SHALL NOT be perpetrated!" said the young officer, firmly.

"D—n, sir! Are you drunk, or mad? You are under arrest, sir! Corporal Truman, take Ensign Shield's sword!"

The young man was quickly disarmed, and once more the captain vociferated.

"Knock down and disarm that vixen! Obey your orders, villains! Or by h—l, and all its fiends, I'll have you all court-martialed, and shot before to-morrow noon!"

The soldiers closed around the unprotected girl.

"Lord, all merciful! forgive my sins," she prayed, and with a firm hand pulled the trigger!

It did not respond to her touch—it failed! it failed!

Casting the traitorous weapon from her, she sunk upon her knees, murmuring,

"*Lost—lost—all is lost!*" remained crushed, overwhelmed, awaiting her fate!

"Ha! ha! ha! as pretty a little make-believe as ever I saw!" laughed the brutal Thorg, now perfectly at his ease, and gloating over her beauty, and helplessness, and deadly terror. "As pretty a little sham as ever I saw!"

"It was *no* sham! She *couldn't* sham! I drawed out the shot unbeknownst to her! I wish, I does, my fingers had shriveled and dropped off afore they *ever* did it!" exclaimed Oliver, in a passion of remorse, as he ran forward, rake in hand.

He was quickly thrown down and disarmed—no one had any hesitation in dealing with *him*.

"*Now* then, my fair!" said Thorg, moving towards his victim.

Edith was now wild with desperation—her eyes flew wildly around in search of help, where help there seemed *none*. Then she turned with the frenzied impulse of flying.

But the men surrounded to cut off her retreat.

"Nay, nay, let her run! let her run! give her a fair start, and do *you* give chase! It will be the rarest sport! Fox-hunting is a good thing, but girl-chasing must be the very h—l of sport, when I tell you—mind, *I tell you*, men—she shall be the exclusive prize of him who catches her!" swore the remorseless Thorg.

Edith had gained the back door.

They started in pursuit.

"Now, by the living Lord that made me, the first man that lays hands on her shall die!" suddenly exclaimed the young ensign, wresting his sword from the hand of the corporal, springing between Edith and her pursuers, flashing out the blade, and brandishing it in the faces of the foremost.

He was but a stripling, scarcely older than Edith's self—the arm that wielded that slender blade scarcely stronger than Edith's own—but the fire that flashed from the eagle eye showed a spirit to rescue or die in her defence.

Thorg threw himself into the most frantic fury—a volley of the most horrible oaths was discharged from his lips.

"Upon that villain, men! beat him down! slay him! pin him to the ground with your bayonets! And then! do your will with the girl!"

But before this fiendish order could be executed, aye, before it was half spoken, whirled into the yard a body of about thirty horsemen, galloping fiercely to the rescue with drawn swords and shouting voices.

They were nearly three times the number of the foraging soldiers.

CHAPTER IV.

YOUNG AMERICA IN 1814.

> "And in they burst! and on they rushed!
> While like a guiding star,
> Amid the thickest carnage blazed
> The helmet of Navarre."—*Battle of Ivry.*

—YOUNG students of C—— Academy—mere boys of from thirteen to eighteen years of age, but brave, spirited, vigorous lads, well mounted, well armed, and led on by the redoubtable college hero, Cloudesley Mornington. They rushed forward, they surrounded, they fell upon the marauders with an absolute shower of blows.

"Give it to them, men! *This* for Fanny! *This* for Edith! And this! and this! and this for both of them!" shouted Cloudesley, as he vigorously laid about him. "Strike for Hay Hill and vengeance! Let them have it, my men! And you, little fellows! small young gentlemen, with the souls of heroes, and the bodies of elves, who can't strike a very hard blow, aim where your blows will tell! aim at their faces. *This* for Fanny! *This* for Edith!" shouted Cloudesley, raining his strokes right and left, but never at random.

He fought his way through to the miscreant Thorg.

Thorg was still on foot, armed with a sword, and laying about him savagely among the crowd of foes that had surrounded him.

Cloudesley was still on horseback—he had caught up an axe that lay carelessly upon the lawn, and now he rushed upon Thorg from behind.

He had no scruple in taking this advantage of the enemy—no scruple with an unscrupulous monster—an outlawed wretch—a wild beast to be destroyed, when and where and how it was possible!

And so Cloudesley came on behind, and elevating this formidable weapon in both hands, raising himself in his stirrups, and throwing his whole weight with the stroke, he dealt a blow upon the head of Thorg that brought him to the earth stunned, perhaps dead. From the impetus Cloudesley himself had received, he had nearly lost his saddle, but had recovered.

"They fly! They fly! By the bones of Cæsar, the miscreants fly! after them, my men! after them! Pursue! pursue!" shouted Cloudesley, wheeling his horse around to follow.

But just then, the young British officer standing near Edith, resting on his sword, breathing, as it were, after a severe conflict, caught Cloudesley's eyes. Intoxicated with victory, Cloudesley sprang from his horse, and raising his axe, rushed up the stairs upon the youth!

Edith sprang and threw herself before the stripling, impulsively clasping her arms around him to shield him, and then throwing up one arm to ward off a blow, looked up and exclaimed,

"He is my preserver—my preserver, Cloudesley!"

And what did the young ensign do? Clasped Edith quietly but closely to his breast.

It was a beautiful, beautiful picture!

Nay, any one might understand how it was—that not years upon years of ordinary acquaintance could have so drawn, so *knitted* these young hearts together as those few hours of supreme danger.

"My preserver, Cloudesley! My preserver!"

Cloudesley grounded his axe.

"I don't understand that, Edith! He is a British officer."

"He is my deliverer! When Thorg set his men on me to hunt me, he cast himself before me, and kept them at bay until you came!"

"Mutinied!" exclaimed Cloudesley, in astonishment, and a sort of horror.

"Yes, I suppose it was mutiny," said the young ensign, speaking for the first time, and blushing as he withdrew his arm from Edith's waist.

"Whe-ew! here's a go!" Cloudesley was about to exclaim, but remembering himself he amended his phraseology, and said, "A very embarrassing situation, yours, sir."

"I can NOT reget it!"

"Certainly not! There are laws of God and humanity above all military law, and such you obeyed, sir! I thank you on the part of my young countrywoman," said Cloudesley, who imagined that he could talk about as well as he could fight.

"If the occasion could recur, I would do it again! Yes, a *thousand* times!" the young man's eyes added to Edith—only to *her*.

"But oh! perdition! while I am talking here that serpent! that copperhead! that cobra capella! is coming round again! How astonishingly tenacious of life all foul, venomous creatures are!" exclaimed Cloudesley, as he happened to espy Thorg moving slightly where he lay, and rushed out to despatch him.

The other two young people were left alone in the hall.

"I am afraid you have placed yourself in a very, *very* dangerous situation, by what you did to save me."

"But do you know—oh, do you know how happy it has made me? Can you divine how my heart—yes, my *soul—burns* with the joy it has given me? When I saw you standing there before your enemies so beautiful! so calm! so constant—I felt that I could die for you—that I *would* die for you. And when I sprang between you and your pursuers, I had *resolved* to die for you. But first to set *your* soul free. Edith, you should not have fallen into the hands of the soldiers! Yes! I had determined to die *for* and *with* you! You are safe. And whatever befals *me*, Edith, will you remember *that*?"

"You are faint! you are wounded! indeed you are wounded! Oh! where! Oh! did any of our people strike you?"

"No—it was one of our men, Edith! I do not know your other name, sweet lady!"

"Never mind my name—it is Edith—that will do; but your wound—your wound—oh! you are very pale—here! lay down upon this settee. Oh, it is too hard!—come into my room, it opens here upon the hall—there is a comfortable lounge there, come in and lie down—let me get you something?"

"Thanks—thanks, dearest lady, but I must get upon my horse and go!"

"Go?"

"Yes, Edith—don't you understand, that after what I have done—after what I have had the *joy* of doing—the only honorable course left open to me, is to go and give myself up to answer the charges that may be brought against me?"

"Oh, Heaven! I know! I know what you have incurred by defending me! I know the awful penalty laid upon a military officer who lifts his hand against his superior. Don't go! oh, don't go!"

"And do you really take so much interest in my fate, sweetest lady?" said the youth, gazing at her with the deepest and most delightful emotions.

"'Take an interest' in my generous protector! How should I help it? Oh! don't go! Don't *think* of going. You will not—will you? *Say* that you will not!"

"You would not advise me to anything dishonorable, I am sure."

"No—no—but oh! at such a fearful cost you have saved me. Oh! when I think of it, I wish you had not interfered to defend me. I wish it had not been done!"

"And *I* would not for the whole world that it had not been done! Do not fear for me, sweetest Edith! I run little risk in voluntarily placing myself in the hands of a court-martial—for British officers *are* gentlemen, Edith!—you must not judge them by those you have seen—and when they hear all the circumstances, I have little doubt that my act will be justified—besides, my fate will rest with Ross, General Ross—one of the most gallant and noble spirits ever created, Edith! And now you must let me go, fairest lady." And he raised her hand respectfully to his lips, bowed reverently, and left the hall to find his horse.

In the meantime Cloudesley Mornington had gone out to despatch Thorg if needful. But when he reached the side of his fallen foe, the body lay so still that Cloudesley believed it dead. He did not like to strike a corpse—but to kill Thorg—to make *sure* of his death, Cloudesley was resolved—he thought it his *duty*—he *felt* it his duty—just as men feel it incumbent upon them to slay any cruel beast of prey fallen into their power. So Cloudesley stood over the monster, with his weapon raised, watching with some curiosity and interest for some sign of life and recovery that should invite the descending blow. He had watched some minutes—occasionally pushing the body with his foot, and scrutinizing the brutal and ferocious face with something of a physiognomist's interest, when the monster suddenly made a great spasmodic heave and plunge—settled himself still again and opened his eyes.

In an instant Cloudesley's foot was planted on his chest, and the point of his sword placed against his throat.

"I believed that you were dead or you never would have opened your eyes again! Say your prayers! Make your peace with Heaven, for your hour has come!"

The miscreant attempted to struggle—feebly, stupidly, ineffectually, for he was half dead, and the pressure of the point of that sword against his throat was dangerous, might be instantly fatal, and it warned him to be still.

"Say your prayers! Make your peace with Heaven if you can, for in five minutes your soul will be in eternity!"

"Cloudesley! Cloudesley!"

The young man raised his eyes to see Edith standing opposite to him.

"Cloudesley! Spare that man! Do not send his soul to God with such a load of sin upon it!"

"Go into the house, dearest Edith!"

"No, not yet! I dare not, Cloudesley! spare that man! Do not kill a fallen, helpless foe, for see, he scarcely breathes now!"

"Edith Lance! will you retire, or do you prefer to remain here and witness an execution?"

"You must not shed blood, Cloudesley! You must not stain your young, pure, innocent hand with blood! For your own sake, spare him!"

"Miss Lance, if you do not leave this, you will speedily see a thing done that will haunt you all the nights of your life!"

"A murder! Yes, Cloudesley, call it by its right name! But you will not do such a deed before my eyes, and I may say upon my very threshold! You will not, Cloudesley! If you will not spare him for *his* sake nor for *your own* sake, Cloudesley! spare him for *mine*, for *Edith's*. I thank God that in this fray no one has been killed on either side. I thank God that the soil of our home is still pure from the stain of blood! Oh, Cloudesley! for *my* sake, for *nature's* sake—yea! for *God's!* do not pollute this spot with blood! Do not spoil its beautiful charm—do not make it hideous and loathsome in my sight! Oh! Cloudesley, if you should do this deed here—oh! Cloudesley! I should never, never enjoy peace of mind again! I should never, never be able to endure my home, or even to look upon your face again with pleasure, Cloudesley! Do not give me so much misery then!"

"Edith! I hunger and thirst! I pant and gasp for this demon's life!"

"But yet, for my sake, you will spare him—the Lord bless you, Cloudesley!"

"Edith! Do you know, 'it hath been said of them of old time,' that it is a fearful thing to come between the criminal and his just retribution? Edith! it hath been said that whoso intercepteth such a righteous retribution, receiveth it upon his own head, even as the object that passes between the thunderbolt and its aim, is shattered to destruction. Edith! I feel strangely impelled to warn you if you interfere to save this man, he will be in some way fatal to you!"

"I accept the risk! I accept it! Yes! I come between the criminal and his doom rather than have a plague spot on my soul or on yours! I intercept the thunderbolt rather than that there should be one blasted spot such as blood would make—upon this sweet green sward!"

Cloudesley sheathed his sword and removed his foot from the chest of the wounded man.

Just then the young ensign was seen approaching leading his horse, but looking frightfully ill, and walking with pain and difficulty.

"You are not going to leave us, sir?" asked Cloudesley.

"I am under the necessity of doing so."

"But you are not able to travel—you can scarcely sit your horse. Pray do not think of leaving us."

"You are a soldier—at least an amateur one, and you will understand that after what has occurred, I must not seem to hide myself like a fugitive from justice! In short, I must go and answer for that which I have done."

"I understand, but really, sir, you look very ill—you—"

But here the young officer held out his hand smilingly, took leave of Cloudesley, and bowing low to Edith, rode off.

Cloudesley and Edith followed the gallant fellow with their eyes. He had nearly reached the gate, the old green gate at the farthest end of the semi-circular avenue, when the horse stopped, the rider reeled and fell from his saddle. Cloudesley and Edith ran towards him—reached him. Cloudesley disentangled his foot from the stirrup, and raised him in his arms. Edith stood pale and breathless by.

"He has fainted! I knew he was suffering extreme pain. Edith! fly and get some water! Or rather here! sit down and hold up his head while I go."

Edith was quickly down by the side of her preserver, supporting his head upon her breast. Cloudesley sped towards the house for water and assistance. When he procured what he wanted and returned, he met the troop of collegians on their return from the chase of the retreating marauders. They reported that they had scattered the fugitives in every direction and lost them in the labyrinths of the forest. They were tremendously elated with their victory. The victory of school boys over regular troops. British troops! That was the way they chose to consider it. But not a very surprising feat of arms when we remember that the boys were healthy and vigorous lads from thirteen to eighteen—well mounted—well armed, and brave as lions, and that they three times outnumbered the enemy, who was already overdone by a day and night and morning of horrid debauchery, and who, taken by surprise, would not even measure the strength of the attacking party.

Yet, nevertheless, the boys were fairly delirious with the pride of their first victory.

When they saw the young British officer upon the ground, supported in the arms of Edith, they rejoiced over another prisoner, as they thought. Two prisoners of war taken by their party! two *officers*, and one the notorious Thorg! That was almost too much glory for the heads of boys to bear sanely!

Several of them dismounted and gathered around the young ensign.

But Cloudesley was now upon the spot, and while he bathed the face of the fainting man, explained to them how it was, and requested some one to ride immediately to the village and procure a physician. Thurston Willcoxen, the next in command under him, and his chosen brother-in-arms, mounted his horse and galloped off.

A mattrass was in the meantime brought down, the wounded man laid carefully upon it, and borne by the boys to the mansion house. He was laid upon a cot in one of the parlors. A young medical student among the youths, sending the crowd from the bedside, proceeded to open his dress and examine his wound, to do what he could for him before the arrival of the doctor.

Edith retired from the room, and sent old Jenny to his assistance. Old Jenny, since recovering from her swoon, had been walking about "settling things up," mechanically, like one in a dream.

Edith found herself alone with Cloudesley, for a few moments.

"Tell me, Cloudesley," she said, "how it was that you came so opportunely to our relief?"

"Why, you see, Edith, this morning we fellows were at our military exercises, in the academy grounds, when the news came of the massacre at Hay Hill. As soon as we heard it, I rode up to the head of our company, and turning and facing them, I said, 'Soldiers, attend!' And they attended. 'You have heard of the inhuman outrages at Hay Hill.' They had heard. 'Then draw your swords.' And they drew. 'Throw away the scabbards.' And they threw. 'Raise their points to Heaven.' And they raised. 'Bow your heads.' And they bowed. 'Now swear by the sacred love you bear your mothers, sisters and sweethearts, never to sheath your blades until you sheath them in English flesh.' And they swore. 'Now cry, "God for Harry, England and St. George!" No! thunder and blazes! that aint it! I mean, "God for vengeance, Fannie, and Hay Hill!"' And they cried. 'Now, right face! quick step! forward! march!' And they marched. And here we are. We came, we saw, we conquered."

"But the doctors! I wonder they did not feel a great responsibility in letting you come!"

"Oh, the Big Wigs *did* try to stop us. But they were not in time. You see, when they saw me from the house haranguing my men, they thought we were only exercising as usual. But when they saw the company defiling down the road, they came running out in a body—old Grim at their head—to see what was the matter. They ordered *us in.* But soldiers know their duty better. I addressed them. 'If any man over thirteen years of age deserts his ranks at this crisis, he shall be forever expelled from this company, and from the society of all honorable men, and shall be considered a 'pshaw! a nuisance in the noses of fellows forever and ever!' The majority stood by me—many even of the little fellows insisted on going with us—and some great lubberly babies of nineteen went back with the professors."

"But you started for Hay Hill. Alas! much too late it *must* have been! But how came you here!"

"That's it! We had proceeded about three miles of our march, and reached the fork in the road where it turns in to the forest towards this place, when we met an old woman who told us that Hay Hill was nothing but a blackened heap of smoking ruins, and that not a soul of either destroyer or victim remained upon the place, but that we must go to Luckenough, where we should be wanted. That the house would be attacked, and there was no one there but Miss Edith to defend it. She said she had started to go to C——, and get us to come for this very purpose—that she could not bear for Miss Edith to suffer, whatever might befall Luckenough!"

"It was poor old Nell, was it not?"

"Yes, it was Nell"

CHAPTER V.

EDITH'S LOVE.

> "A lightsome eye, a soldier's mien,
> A feather of the blue,
> A doublet of the Lincoln green—
> No more of me you knew,
> My love!
> No more of me you knew."—*Sir Walter Scott.*

"Edith! I should not hesitate to announce the fact to a young lady of less resolution than yourself, but my dear Lady Castellaine! we must fortify this 'castle' as well as we can against a possible renewal of the attack, for the probability is those rascals—I beg your pardon, Edith—may report their own defeat, and our weakness, and return with a reinforcement to burn or batter down these walls over our heads. So, I believe I must go and see the other fellows, Edith, and consult what is best to be done," said Cloudesley Mornington, touching his cap to the young lady of the mansion, as he left her.

Cloudesley went to call a council of war in the saloon.

Edith glided softly to the door of the parlor, where, stretched upon a cot, lay her wounded champion. But though she listened attentively, all was so still within, that she could hear nothing of his condition. After a little anxious listening, and a little awkward hesitation, she tapped softly at the door, and brought out Solomon Weismann, the young medical student, before mentioned.

"How is—is—*Thorg?*" asked the maiden.

"Thorg—oh!—*he?*—why, he is seriously injured—a contusion of the cerebellum, and concussion of the cerebrum, depriving him for the present of the powers of volition and sensation, and threatening to terminate in death. He is now lying on a cot in the next room to this of the young ensign, in a comatose state, with a half a peck of ice about his head, and half a peck of mustard about his extremities. May destiny baffle the utmost skill of medical science in his case! I feel it my duty to do all that can be done to save him, but I hope it may fail, that's all."

"You must not encourage such feelings in your heart—for the purity and nobility of your own soul, you must not. But—your other patient?"

"The young ensign? Oh! He is very dreadfully injured, indeed, Miss Lance," replied the youth, who, knowing nothing of the circumstance of his patient's having received his injuries in Edith's defence, could not guess that she should take any deep interest in his fate.

"Has his wound been dressed?—is he suffering much?" asked Edith, in a tremulous voice.

"Why, yes—to both of your questions! I have dressed his wound as well as circumstances will admit, but he is suffering extremely; *must* be, you know, Miss Lance. You see, his injury is a very complicated one—it is at once a punctured, contused, and lacerated wound—tearing the pectoralis-minor, shattering the third and fourth ribs, with the intercostal muscles, near their articulation with the second os-sternum, and driving the splintered bones through the pleura-costalis, and the pleura-pulmonalis into the parenchyma," answered the young student, making the most of the occasion to display his science.

"But—is that—a very dangerous wound or not? I think I don't quite understand," said Edith, faintly.

"Well, I judge it to be a very bad thing, Miss Lance, when the ribs are broken and driven into the substance of the lungs."

"Oh!" gasped the young girl, with a painful start, as if she herself had received a bayonet thrust through the bosom.

The medical student went pitilessly on, regardless of the pain he was inflicting—

"High inflammation and fever has set in, and he is suffering excruciating agony."

"I hope—you are mistaken—I did not hear—him groan—once," faltered Edith.

"Why, no! really, he shows the most marvellous fortitude—while I was examining and probing his wound, and picking out little splinters of bone from the pleura, and taking up an artery, and closing up the ragged gash—though his lips were white, and his brow knitted with the mortal agony, not a groan escaped him! no, not one! I could not help admiring him, enemy to our country as he is!"

Edith was unconsciously wringing and compressing her hands.

"But—the wound is not mortal—not mortal?"

"Why, what a tender heart you have, Miss Edith, to feel so much compassion for a wounded enemy. Suppose it had been one of our countrymen—yes! suppose it had been *me*? Why, the shock would have killed you!"

"But the wound is not mortal—you—said so—didn't you?"

"Of course I did not, Miss Lance. Certainly the wound *is* mortal; but you need not distress your kind heart about it, for though we shall do all that we possibly can to alleviate his sufferings, yet still we must consider that he *is* our country's enemy, and therefore I should think you need not lay awake, to-night, thinking of his misery, or go into mourning for him when he dies."

"Oh, I *wish*, I *wish* the surgeon would come! When do you *think* he will come? You are so young, so inexperienced, you cannot be an infallible judge—you may be mistaken. Oh! *when* do you think the doctor will be here?"

"It is impossible for me to say, Miss Lance," replied Solomon, piqued at her distrust of his own skill; "I do not know—but what I *do* know is, that the doctor cannot do much when he *does* come. And whether he gets here to-night or not, I can tell you how it will all end. The inflammation must increase, and the fever rise until it reaches delirium, and his excruciating agonies must continue to augment until mortification sets in, when the pain will abate, and the fever subside, and an easy death close the scene. This will probably take place some time to-morrow morning. Anything more you wish to know, Miss Lance?"

"No! no!"

The young man disappeared within, closing the door after him.

A short gasp, a suppressed sob, and Edith leaned, half fainting, against the wainscotting.

Presently she heard wheels roll up to the door and stop. She looked up. It was the carriage of the surgeon, whom she saw alight and walk up the steps. She went to meet him, composedly as she could, and conducted him to the door of the sick room, which he entered. Edith remained in the hall, softly walking up and down, and sometimes pausing to listen.

After a little, the door opened. It was only Solomon Weismann, who asked for warm water, lint, and a quantity of old linen. These Edith quickly supplied, and then remained alone in the hall, walking up and down, and pausing to listen as before; once she heard a deep shuddering groan, as of one in mortal extremity, and her own heart and frame thrilled to the sound, and then all was still as before.

An hour, two hours, passed, and then the door opened again, and Edith caught a glimpse of the surgeon, with his shirt sleeves pushed above his elbows, and a pair of bloody hands

It was Solomon who opened the door to ask for a basin of water, towels and soap, for the doctor to wash. Edith furnished these also.

Half an hour passed, and the door opened a third time, and the doctor himself came out, fresh and smiling. His countenance and his manner were in every respect encouraging.

"Come into the drawing-room a moment, if you please, Miss Edith, I want to speak with you."

Edith desired nothing more, just at that moment.

"Well, doctor—your patient?" she inquired, anxiously.

"Will do very well! Will do very well! That is, if he be properly attended to, and that is what I wished to speak to you about, Miss Edith. I have seen you near sick beds before this, my dear, and know that I can better trust you than any one to whom I could at present apply. I intend to instal you as his nurse, my dear. When a life depends upon your care, you will waive any scruples you might otherwise feel, Miss Edith, I am sure! You will have your old maid, Jenny, to assist you, and Solomon at hand, in case of an emergency. But I intend to delegate my authority, and leave my directions with you."

"Yes, doctor, I will do my very best for your patient."

"I am sure of that. I am sure of that."

She wished to tell him that the invalid was her preserver, and had received the wound in defending her from his own party, but it was a long, eloquent story, in Edith's apprehension; she would not interrupt his directions by alluding to it now—she would do full justice to it another time. Now she wanted to receive his orders and ask some questions.

"His wound, doctor, is not dangerous then?"

"Well—no, Miss Edith, if he is properly nursed."

"Solomon Weismann told me the wound was a very terrible one," said Edith, repeating the description he had given of the injury.

The doctor laughed.

"Solomon is a pedantic fool! and bent upon astonishing everybody with his knowledge."

"Sarvunt, sir! Beg your pardon, marster, fer interruptin' o' you! but you 'low how Marse Solomun Weismann was not sensible o' his 'fession?" inquired Jenny, appearing at the door with a scrap of paper in her hand, which she studied very dubiously.

"Well, now, Aunty, I rather think it is no concern of yours."

"'Deed, beg your pardon, marster, it's a *heap* o' 'cern o' mine. 'Cause, you see, marster, how I took a 'struction in my t'roat quinsequence o' settin' out'n de jew long o' Miss Edy las' night. So jes' now I tells Doctor Solomun 'bout it. An' he look down my t'roat, he did, an' 'formed me how I had de tongs-an-sumtin-or oder."

"Do you mean tonsilitis?"

"Yes, marse! dat it! tongs-and-eat-us, an' he guv me dis yer 'scription!" said Jenny, handing the mysterious scrap of paper. "Please read it, marster, an' see if it's all right—case I has my doubts o' dese yer youngsters."

The doctor took the paper and laughingly read, "Pulv. Capsi. one scruple, Chlorid. Sodea. half a scruple, Aceti. half a fluid ounce, Aqua. Puris. Bull., quantum suf."

Jenny listened with her mouth and eyes growing wider at every item, until at its conclusion she burst out indignantly with,

"Dar! what I tell you? Mus' t'ink how people's a funnelly fool! to heave all dat dere rank pisen truck down der 'troats!"

"Why, that's all very good!—all right!—simple and proper remedy enough! *that's* the pedantic for red pepper tea! which you know of yourself is good for a common sore throat, and which you can make for yourself well enough! There! now take yourself off Jenny; I have something to say to your mistress."

Jenny left the room, grumbling to herself,

"Wonner why de debbil dat der 'ceited fellow could'nt o' telled me to make pepper tea for my sore t'roat 'stead of writin' down Pull. Caps an Aquafortis bull. It do soun gran' though, 'deed do it! 'Aqua fortis,' I'll member of 'em! Ah! Lor', what it is to have an edification!"

The doctor was giving Edith his last directions.

"Above all things, Miss Lance, the patient must be kept entirely free from heat and excitement of all kinds—he must be kept perfectly still and cool, yet not *too* cool—you must use your judgment. You will find the same directions, together with my written orders for the regulation of his medicine and diet for the next twenty-four hours, on this paper." And the doctor placed in her hands a folded slip, and took his departure.

Edith was glad to have the privilege—nay, the *duty* of nursing her invalid. Yet she felt by no means at ease. She knew the doctor's way of old—how, with his cheerful, hopeful temper, and encouraging, flattering tongue, he was just as apt to put too fair a face upon matters as Mr. Solomon was to put too dark a one. She had often heard it said of the doctor, "Oh! Doctor Brightwell, though the best doctor in the world, will never own that there is anything serious the matter until the patient is in the grave!" Edith knew it to be true of him, too. And so it was not with the lightest of hearts that she entered the sick room of her patient. She was relieved from the deep despondency into which Solomon's report had thrown her, but not from anxiety. She prepared the iced tamarind water the doctor had ordered to cool his burning thirst, and placed it on a stand at hand, and then she took a large feather fan and sat down to fan him—her present duty being to keep him cool, yet to keep his chest covered carefully, lest the least air should penetrate to that dreadful wound, and to give him drink whenever he needed it. Since the fatigue and pain of the second and thorough examination and dressing, the surgeon had found it necessary to give the wound after his clumsy student, the patient had fallen into the sleep of exhaustion. But his face was flushed with rising fever, his slumber was restless—he murmured in his disturbed dreams, and threw about his left arm; his right arm, though itself uninjured, was bound down, lest its slightest motion should disturb the wound upon that side. He needed the closest watching, the most vigilant attention, such as only one so interested in his life as Edith was would give him. He awoke several times in the course of the evening, and took the drink from her hands, but never recognized his nurse. He called her "Marian," and "dearest Marian." But never "Edith." Edith, and the scenes of the last few hours, seemed to have passed from his memory. As his fever rose, the poor girl's heart sank, she thought Solomon's prophecy was about to be fulfilled.

The long, gawky figure, red head, and freckled face of the medical student frequently appeared at the door, and once during the evening he relieved her watch, while she went out to give some orders to Jenny and Oliver.

"And I likes for to know, Miss Edy, what we-dem got to get for dem dar boys' suppers? Dey aint had the fust bit o' dinner, an' is as hungry as houn' dogs," said the latter.

And indeed it was a serious consideration. There were some thirty youth; and the provisions of the garrison of Luckenough were not extensive—the first evacuating party under Commodore Waugh having carried off nearly all the edibles. Edith was nonplussed.

"If I kills all de chickens as is left, and cooks all de bacon and eggs, der'll be enough for to-night and to-morrow mornin'. But what de debbil we-dem gwine do arter *dat?*"

"Oh, well! if there's enough for the present, use it, Jenny, and to-morrow we can send to some of the neighbors and get provisions." So this matter was settled, and Edith resumed her watch.

She watched by his cot through all the night, fanning him softly, keeping his chest covered from the air, giving him his medicine at the proper intervals, and putting drink to his lips when he needed it. But never trusted her eyelids to close for a moment. Jenny shared her vigil by nodding in an easy chair; and the young medical student by sleeping soundly on the wooden settee in the hall. So passed the night. After midnight, to Edith's great relief, his fever began to abate, and he sunk into a sweet sleep. In the morning Solomon roused himself, and came in and relieved Edith's watch, and attended to the wants of the patient, while she went to her room to bathe her face and weary eyes.

After breakfast there was an arrival at the house. Two of the professors from the academy came in search of their pupils. They explained that they should have come the evening before had not the return of Doctor Brightwell to the village, and his report of the state of affairs at Luckenough, put them at ease in respect to their charge. The professors reported that the British forces were far on their march to Washington City, and the neighborhood was for the present delivered from their company. The lads were then mustered, the roll called, and all being found right, they departed with the professors once more for "Academic Shades." And Edith and her patient, with Jenny and Oliver, who attended Thorg, were left alone in the hall.

She prepared the light, nutritious food he was permitted to partake, and placed it on the stand by the bedside ready for him, when he should awake, and then resumed her seat beside him to fan him, and to watch the refreshing sleep into which he had fallen. No mother ever watched her child with more care and tenderness.

How she thanked Heaven for that restoring sleep, and for the deep, cool quiet of the whole house, so favorable to the sufferer. The back windows of the room were open, but the thick branches of the old elm trees made a dark, pleasant shade, and the cool breeze murmured low, slumbrous music through the rustling leaves as it came into the room. Everything was so soothing and refreshing to the invalid, and she so quietly rejoiced in it.

How strangely—how suddenly this new interest had entered her soul Twenty-four hours ago, and she had never known the existence of this generous, noble boy, who now occupied all her thoughts. Twenty-four hours ago she had not seen his face, and now that beautiful countenance, with the elegant Hebrew profile—the high, pale forehead, crested with raven black ringlets, the acquiline nose with the thin, quivering nostril, the short, haughty upper lip, and the superbly curved chin, the dark, flashing eyes, "like the eagle's, yet sometimes like the dove's"—the eyes that had blazed with such insufferable light when defending her, yet softened into such ineffable tenderness when speaking to her—the whole beautiful, spirited, yet gentle countenance, seemed familiar and dear as though it had always been associated with her life, and indispensable to its happiness.

Towards noon he opened his eyes, turned them around the room, and slowly came to the consciousness of his position. His wandering glance fell upon Edith, and softened and brightened as it were at once. With a smile full of almost child-like surprise and delight, he stretched out his hand to her.

"Are you nursing me, dear lady? this is very good."

"How do you feel now?" asked Edith, taking the hand that he held out. It was rather feverish, and she began to sponge it with cold water.

"I am better, I think, gentle lady. I thank you very much."

His voice was faint, he spoke with difficulty, and after saying that, spoke only with his eloquent eyes, while Edith bathed his hands and face, and placed his little refreshment to his lips.

In the midst of this the surgeon arrived, and entered the hall in a little smothered bustle.

Edith went out to receive him. He had brought along with him an elderly lady from the village—one Miss Nancy Skamp—a distant relative of his own, who, he told Edith, would remain with her as long as she needed her company and assistance.

Miss Nancy had gone up stairs in charge of Jenny, to take off her bonnet and "things."

Edith accompanied the doctor to the sick room. He received Edith's report, praised her skill, examined the condition of his patient, and was sorry to find him not so well as he had hoped and expected. There appeared to be much inflammation, and the fever was rising again.

Edith supplied the doctor with everything requisite for the re-dressing of the wound, sent Jenny in to wait upon him, and then went out to welcome Miss Nancy Skamp, who was now coming down the stairs.

Miss Nancy, by-the-way, was "own aunt" and sole proprietress of Mr. Solomon Skamp Weismann, the promising young aspirant to medical honors. She was like him, too. They were "like as two pins," the neighbors said. The same tall, bony figure—the same red hair—the same fair, freckled skin—the same sharp, thin features, which, nevertheless, gave a masculine look to the old lady's face, and a feminine air to the young gentleman's. Miss Nancy piqued herself upon her own and her nephew's red hair and freckles—they were the signs, she said, of the very purest Saxon blood—none of your Celtic, or other inferior races, ever freckled or had red hair.

In talking with Edith, Miss Nancy corroborated the report made by the professors in the morning—the British forces had entirely left the neighborhood—that was ascertained beyond all doubt.

"But, oh! wasn't that the awfullest massa*cree* at Hay Hill, Miss Edith?"

"Horrible, indeed! And who could have foreseen it?" said Edith, shuddering.

"Why, most any one, Miss Edith, I should think! It has always been *my* opinion, when people come to bad ends it's their own faults. Now, there's Fanny Fairlie—"

"Dearest Fanny! has anything been heard of her since that night?"

"No, nothing certain. They do say she was seen rambling about in the woods, as mad as a March hare. The two old negroes that escaped massa*creeing*, you know, are staying at Old Fields, with Mrs. L'Olseau. It seems to me she has enough to feed, poor lady, without them."

The doctor now entered, to leave new directions with Edith and Miss Nancy, and to take his departure.

He said he should send Solomon over that night, to sit up with the sick man.

So, towards evening, according to promise, Mr. Solomon arrived. And soon after supper Miss Nancy obliged Edith and her two fatigued attendants to go to their several apartments.

For some time after Edith lay down, she was kept awake by that strong nervous excitability induced by loss of sleep, and it was midnight when at last she sunk into a fitful and perturbed slumber. About two hours after she was awakened by the sound of groans. She sat up to listen. It was her patient, who was groaning and tossing, and talking to himself, and no one seeming to pay the slightest attention to him.

Edith arose quickly, slipped on her dressing-gown, and went into his room.

There sat the aunt and nephew sound asleep. And there rolled and tossed the wounded man, wild with fever, pain and burning thirst.

Edith gave him the cooling beverage, and sponged his head and face and hands with aromatic vinegar. But the fierce heat of the fever dried up the moisture without being cooled by it, and he still raved and tossed in high delirium. Edith was very much alarmed. She roused up Mr. Solomon, and sent him, on horseback, to the village for the doctor. And then she woke up Miss Nancy, who had slept through all this, and whose first words, when she opened her eyes, were,

"Ah! I am glad you have come, Miss Edith, for I have not closed my eyes all night, and I'm all but worn out; so now, honey, if you'll just take my place, I'll go and try to get some sleep." And rising and yawning, she walked away.

Edith let her depart, and waked up Jenny in her stead. The patient's delirium rose to frenzy; and it began to be as much as Jenny and Oliver, who was called to her assistance, could do to keep him in the bed. The doctor came at sunrise. He administered such remedies as his skill and experience suggested, but ascribed the whole mischief to the first unskillful dressing of the wound by Solomon, and said that he was sure some extraneous substance had been permitted to work its way into the lungs, where no one knew the extent of the evil it might now, or eventually cause.

Be that as it might, the present sufferings of the patient were terrible. And for days life was despaired of. The most skillful medical treatment, and the most careful nursing only, had scarcely saved his life. And even after the imminent danger was over, it was weeks before he was able to be lifted from the bed to the sofa.

In the meantime, Thorg recovered, and prepared to leave the house. He took quite an affectionate leave of the young ensign, and with an appearance of great friendliness and honesty, promised to interest himself, at head-quarters, in behalf of the young officer. This somehow filled Edith with a vague distrust, and dark foreboding, for which she could neither account, nor excuse herself, nor yet shake off. Thorg had been exchanged, and he joined his regiment after its return from Washington City, and before it sailed from the shores of America.

Weeks passed, during which the invalid occupied the sofa in his room—and Edith was his sole nurse; Miss Nancy Skamp having left the house. And then Commodore Waugh, with his wife, servants, and caravan, returned to Luckenough.

The old soldier had been "posted up," he said, relative to all that had transpired in his absence.

There were no words, he declared, to express his admiration of Edith's "heroism."

It was in vain that Edith assured him that she had not been heroic at all—that the preservation of Luckenough had been due rather to the timely succor of the college boys, than to her own imprudent resolution. It did no good—the old man was determined to look upon his niece as a heroine worthy to stand by the side of Joan of Arc.

"For," said he, "was it not the soul of a heroine, that enabled her to stay and guard the house; and would the college company ever have come to the rescue of *these* old walls, if they had not heard that *she* had resolutely remained to guard them.

and was almost alone in the house? Don't tell me! Edith is the star maiden of old St. Mary's, and I'm proud of her! She is worthy to be my niece and heiress! A true descendant of Marie Zelenski, is she! And I'll tell you what I'll do, Edith!" he said, turning to her, "I'll reward you, my dear! I *will.* I'll marry you to Professor Grimshaw! *That's* what I'll do, my dear! And you both shall have Luckenough; *that* you shall!"

Months passed—the war was over—peace was proclaimed, and still the young ensign, an invalid, unable to travel, lingered at Luckenough. Regularly he received his pay; twice he received an extension of leave of absence; and all through the instrumentality of—THORG. Yet all this filled Edith with the greatest uneasiness and foreboding—ungrateful, incomprehensible, yet impossible to be delivered from.

CHAPTER VI.

EDITH'S TROUBLES.

> "One hath stirred within thy breast
> The quick and lasting interest,
> That is not easily suppressed."

"I CANNOT tell, for the life of me, why Edith should prefer the love of a stranger, whom she hasn't known half a year, to that of her old uncle, whom she has known all her life," growled Old Nick.

"You must remember your own youth—you preferred the love of a stranger to that of the father you had known all your life," said good Henrietta.

"Humph! Humph!" said the Commodore.

"Yes, and you wished to marry, too, when you were young."

"No! I didn't, neither, Old Hen, I ran away from you and went to sea, and was gone nigh upon twenty years. If *I* married, it was all *your* doings, indeed! What would ail *me* to tie myself to *one* tree, when I could have the range of the whole orchard? But you had waited for me so long, and were so fond of me. However! I won't hit you in the teeth with it, Old Honey. But now about Edith! If she must fall in love! I want to know why in the mischief she don't fall in love with Grim'? Now, Grim' is what I call a man for *any* woman's eye, that is, if *I* know anything about women!"

"Which you don't!"

"Isn't he a very handsome man, now?"

"In his own opinion."

"Well, he is very learned, *that* you'll admit?"

"Pedantic, you mean."

"And very religious!"

"Self-righteous."

"Oh-h-h!" roared the Commodore, thrusting forward his head, and striking his stick upon the floor, "I vow to heaven, Old Hen, you'd be-devil an angel."

"Yes! angels of darkness!"

"I uphold that Grim' is a *perfect* man!"

"Oh! yes! Professor Grimshaw is perfectly intolerable! *Edith* feels that as well as I do."

"Intolerable upon what account, I should like to be informed? If he were ugly, or deformed, or stupid, or poor, I could comprehend it; but he is a man of good looks, good parts, and good prospects!"

"Yes! but women don't necessarily fall in love with a man's beauty, intellect, or social advantages."

"With what *then*, I want very much to know! With his ugliness, or stupidity, or forlornity, I suppose?"

"Just as likely as not."

"Oh-h-h!" bellowed Old Nick, thrusting forward his great head, and ramming his stick into the floor, "O-h-h-h! You put me past all my patience with your conceit, and your rash general rules. You never knew one particular instance of what you say. I defy you to tell me one, just one, now one!"

"Well, I married *you*."

"Humph! Humph! Humph!" said Old Nick.

There was a long pause after this.

"Well, at last," said the old Commodore, "what I have resolved upon is this—that Grim' shall be the master of Luckenough, let who will be the mistress!"

"Then give it to him in the name of all that's ugly, but don't, for heaven's sake, tempt any of your poor nieces, through their necessities, or clog the gift with the burden of an unwilling and unacceptable wife. As for Edith, *her* heart's integrity is incorruptible—and Doctor Grimshaw himself, occupies his thoughts as little with Edith as she does with him."

"Now, that's what I call confounded perversity and ingratitude, when they know how it would please me, and my good intentions towards them. What the mischief should ail Grim' and Edith, not to fall in love with each other, when I desire it?"

"Because honest hearts are not to be bought, or sold, or persuaded."

"Oh-h-h!" blowed Old Nick, "I'm tired of all the confounded nonsense! but I know what I'll do."

Here the conversation ended.

From the foregoing dialogue, you will see how affairs stood at Luckenough. It was late in the spring, Mr. Shields had received orders to join his regiment in Canada, and upon their reception, he had had an explanation with Edith, and with her permission, had requested her hand of her uncle, Commodore Waugh. This threw the veteran into a towering passion, and nearly drove him from his proprieties as host. The young ensign was unacceptable to him upon every account. First and foremost, he wasn't "Grim." Then he *was* an Israelite. And, lastly! horror of horrors! he was a British officer, and *dared* to aspire to the hand of Edith. It was in vain that his wife, the good Henrietta, tried to mollify him; the storm raged for several days—raged, till it had expended all its strength, and subsided from exhaustion. Then he came, as he always ultimately did, under the influence of Henrietta's calm temperament and better judgment. First of all, she assured him that "what will be, will be," that whether he opposed or favored the match, it would finally come off, that love is no respecter of persons, prejudices or creeds—that any one could see that two such lovely, excellent beings as Edith and Shields, were created for each other, and would make a "matchless pair" If he did not contradict her, he assented silently, or with a grunt—a bearish, sullen sort of assent—and he took his resolution. Soon after this he summoned Edith to his presence.

"Come here, huzzy! So! you're determined, are you, to marry this young rascal?"

Edith cast her eyes on the ground, but did not speak.

"Well, I am to take your silence for assent, I suppose? Very good. Now, here is my ultimatum. I am no *tyrant*, minion, do you hear! I oppose nobody's freedom of will—not I! I let every fool do as they like; only I claim the privilege of doing as *I* like also. God Almighty gave man so much free agency, that he may redeem and sanctify himself, if he pleases, or damn himself to all eternity, if he likes that better! Heaven save me from the sin of depriving one of His creatures of their meed of liberty! Therefore, Miss Edith Lance! marry, *if* you like, and *whom* you like. You are of age! But hear, in that case, what I shall do. I have hitherto made no secret of my intentions towards you. They *were*, to have made you the heiress of all my possessions. Now all I have to say to you is this—that if you will have the good sense to marry Mr. Grimshaw, these intentions shall be *more* than fulfilled—they shall be *anticipated*. Upon your marriage with Grimshaw, I will give you a conveyance of Luckenough—only reserving to myself and Old Hen a house, and a life-support in the place; but if you will persist in your foolish preference for that young scamp, I will give you—*nothing*. That is all, Edith. Now go and do as you please. Only, as the Master said when He was betrayed by one He had chosen; 'What thou doest, do quickly!' I cannot *bear* suspense!"

During the speech Edith remained standing, with her eyes fixed upon the floor. Now, she spoke with tearful eyes and in a tremulous voice.

"That *is* all—is it not, uncle? You will not deprive me of any portion of your love: will you, uncle?"

"I do not know, Edith! I cannot tell; when you have deliberately chosen one of your *own* fancy, in preference to one of *mine*—the man I care most for in the world, and whom I chose especially for you; why, you've speared me right through a very tender part; however, as I said before, what you do, do quickly! I cannot bear to be kept upon the tenter hooks!"

"I will talk with Michael, uncle," said Edith, meekly.

She went out, and found him pacing the lawn at the back of the house.

He turned towards her with a glad smile, took her hand as she approached him, and pressed it to his lips.

"Dearest Edith, where have you been so long?"

"With my uncle, Michael. I have my uncle's 'ultimatum,' as he calls it."

"What is it, Edith?"

"Ah! how shall I tell you without offence? But, dearest Michael, you will not mind—you will forgive an old man's childish prejudices, especially when you know they are not *personal*—but circumstantial, national, bigoted."

"Well, Edith! well?"

"Michael, he says—he says that I may give you my hand—"

"Said he so! bless that fair hand, and bless him who bestows it!" he exclaimed, clasping her fingers and pressing them to his lips.

"Yes, Michael, but—"

"But what! there is *no* but; he permits you to give me your hand; there is then no but—'a jailor to bring forth some monstrous malefactor.'"

"Yet listen! You know I was to have been his heiress!"

"No, indeed I did not know it! never heard it! never suspected it! never even thought of it! How did I know but that he had sons and daughters, or nephews away at school!"

"Well, I was to have been his heiress. Now he disinherits me, unless I consent to be married to his friend and favorite, Dr. Grimshaw."

"You put the case gently and delicately, dear Edith, but the hard truth is this—is it not—that he will disinherit you, if you consent to be mine? You need not answer me, dearest Edith, if you do not wish to; but listen—I have nothing but my sword, and beyond my boundless love, nothing to offer you but the wayward fate of a soldier's wife. Your eyes are full of tears. Speak, Edith Lance! can you share the soldier's wandering life? Speak, Edith, or lay your hand in mine. Yet, no! no! no! I am selfish and unjust. Take time, love, to think of all you abandon, all that you may encounter in joining your fate to mine. God knows what it has cost me to say it—but—take time, Edith," and he pressed and dropped her hand.

"I do not need to do so. My answer to-day, to-morrow, and forever, must be the same," she answered, in a very low voice; and her eyes sought the ground, and the blush deepened on her cheek, as she laid her hand in his. How he pressed that white hand to his lips, to his heart! how he clasped her to his breast! how he vowed to love and cherish her as the dearest treasure of his life, need not here be told.

Edith said,

"Now take me in to uncle, and tell him, for he asked me not to keep him in suspense."

Michael led her into the hall, where the Commodore strode up and down, making the old rafters tremble and quake with every tread—puffing—blowing over his fallen hopes, like a nor'-wester over the dead leaves.

Michael advanced, holding the hand of his affianced, and modestly announced their engagement.

"Humph! So the precious business is concluded, is it?"

"Yes, sir," said Michael, with a bow.

"Well, I hope you may be as happy as you deserve! When is the proceeding to come off?"

"What, sir?"

"The marriage, young gentleman?"

"When shall I say, dearest Edith?" asked Michael, stooping to her ear.

"When uncle pleases," murmured the girl.

"Uncle pleases nothing, and will have nothing to do with it, except to advise as early a day as possible," he blurted out, "what says the bride?"

"Answer, dearest Edith," entreated Michael Shields.

"Then let it be at New-Year," said Edith, falteringly.

"Whew!—six months ahead! Entirely too far off!" exclaimed the Commodore.

"And so it really is, beloved," whispered Michael.

"Let it be next week," abruptly broke in the Commodore. "What's the use of putting it off? Tuesdays and Thursdays are the marrying days, I believe; let it then be Tuesday or Thursday."

"Tuesday," pleaded Michael.

"Thursday," murmured Edith.

"The deuce!—if you can't decide, I must decide for you," growled Old Nick, storming down towards the extremity of the hall, and roaring—"Old Hen! Old Hen! these fools are to be spliced on SUNDAY! Now bring me my pipe;" and the Commodore withdrew to his sanctum.

Good Henrietta came in, took the hand of the young ensign, and pressed it warmly, saying that he would have a good wife, and wishing them both much happiness in their union. She drew Edith to her bosom, and kissed her fondly, but in silence.

As this was Friday evening, little preparations could be made for the solemnity to take place on Sunday. Yet Mrs. Henrietta exerted herself to do all possible honor to the occasion. That very evening she sent out a few invitations to the dinner and ball, that in those days invariably celebrated a country wedding. She even invited a few particular friends to meet the bridal pair at dinner, on their return from church.

The little interval between this and Sunday morning, was passed by Edith and Shields in making arrangements for their future course.

Sunday came.

A young lady of the neighborhood officiated as bridesmaid, and Cloudesley Mornington as groomsman. The ceremony was to be performed at the Episcopal Church, at Charlotte Hall. The bridal party set forward in two carriages. They were attended by the Commodore and Mrs. Waugh. They reached the church at an early hour, and the marriage was solemnized before the morning service. When the entries had been made, and the usual congratulations passed, the party returned to the carriages. Before entering his own, Commodore Waugh approached that in which the bride and bridegroom were already seated, and into which the groomsman was about to hand the bridesmaid.

"Stay, you two, you need not enter just yet," said the old man, "I want to speak with Mr. Shields and his wife. Edith!"

Edith put her head forward, eagerly.

"I have nothing against you; but after what has occurred, I don't want to see you at Luckenough again. Good-bye!' Then turning to Shields, he said, "I will have your own and your wife's goods forwarded to the hotel, here," and nodding gruffly, he strode away.

Cloudesley stormed, Edith begged that the carriage might be delayed yet a little while. Vain Edith's hope, and vain Mrs. Waugh's expostulations, Old Nick was not to be mollified. He said that "those who pleased to remain with the new-married couple, might do so—*he* should go home! *They* did as they liked, and *he* should do as he liked." Mrs. Waugh, Cloudesley, and the bridesmaid determined to stay.

The Commodore entered his carriage, and was driven towards home.

The party then adjourned to the hotel. Mrs. Waugh comforting Edith, and declaring her intention to stay with her as long as she should remain in the neighborhood—for Henrietta always did as she pleased, notwithstanding the opposition of her stormy husband. The young bridesmaid and Cloudesley also expressed their determination to stand by their friends to the last.

Their patience was not put to a very long test. In a few days a packet was to sail from Benedict to Baltimore, and the young couple took advantage of the opportunity, and departed, with the good wishes of their few devoted friends.

Their destination was Toronto, in Canada, where the young ensign's regiment was quartered.

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER VII.

SANS SOUCI.

> "A little child, a limber elf,
> Singing, dancing to itself.
> A fairy thing, with red, round cheeks,
> That always finds and never seeks.
> Makes such a joy unto the sight,
> As fills a parent's eyes with light."—*Coleridge.*

SEVERAL miles from the manor of Luckenough, upon a hill not far from the sea-coast, stood the cottage of the Old Fields.

There was nothing sublime or beautiful, or in any respect attractive about the place, unless indeed the very dreariness of its aspect might have a curious interest for the chance traveler.

The house was a small, square edifice, of dingy white, shaded by a single large elm, and surrounded by a somewhat dilapidated fence.

Around it on all sides lay exhausted old fields, in a state of almost absolute sterility.

Beyond them, landward, stretched the old forest of St. Mary's, and seaward, the beach, and the waters of the bay.

An attempt had been made to cultivate the miserable soil nearest the house, and a garden of half-blighted vegetables, and a field of stunted corn, that lay withering under the burning heat of an August sun, added to the unpromising appearance of the whole. In short, nothing could be more desolate and hopeless than the aspect of Old Fields' Cottage, at the time of which we write.

The house contained but two rooms, one on the ground floor, which served as kitchen, parlor, and sitting-room, and one just above, which, being nothing more than a loft, was, nevertheless, the sleeping apartment of the whole family.

The property was an appendage to the Manor of Luckenough, and was at this time occupied by a poor relation of Commodore Waugh, his niece, Mary L'Oiseau, the widow of a French emigreè. Mrs. L'Oiseau had but one child, a little girl, Jacquelina, now about eight or nine years of age.

Commodore Waugh had given them the cottage to live in, with permission to make a living, if they could, out of the poor land attached to it. This was all the help he had afforded his poor niece, and all, as she said, that she could reasonably expect from one who had so many dependants. For several years past the little property had afforded her a bare subsistence.

And now this year the long drought had parched up her garden and corn-field, and her cows had failed in their yield of milk for the want of grass.

It was upon a dry and burning day, near the last of August, that Mary L'Oiseau and her daughter sat down to their frugal breakfast. And *such* a frugal breakfast! the cheapest tea, with brown sugar, and a corn cake baked upon the griddle, and a little butter—that was all! It was spread upon a plain pine table without a table-cloth.

The furniture of the room was in keeping—a sanded floor, a chest of drawers, with a small looking-glass, ornamented by a sprig of asparagus, a dresser of rough pine shelves on the right of the fire-place, and a cupboard on the left, a half-dozen chip-bottomed chairs, a spinning-wheel, and a reel and jack, completed the appointments.

The heart of the widow was sore, too sore for comfort or hope, as she sat down to the table—for poor as this meal was, it was almost the last, and there was no hope. And now not even the glad beauty of her charming, though willful child, her little Jacquelina, nor the quaint talk of Jenny, who had come over that morning from Luckenough, could divert her from her sadness.

"Look yer, Miss Mary! Don't you set down dere in idleness, an' 'spair 'an 'cuse Providence, 'cause fortin don't come an' walk into de door. You up an' try somet'in'."

"Why what *can* I try, Jenny?"

"Anyt'in'—'ply to Congress for a penance for what yer father did in the Rebelutionary War!"

Mary laughed now, but answered, gravely,

"I do not think I like such things—it's troublesome and expensive, and if we should get anything, which is doubtful, there are eight brothers and sisters of us, among whom the pittance would have to be divided, and it wouldn't be the least worth while."

"Trufe is, Old Marse ought to do more for you 'an he does!'

"How can he? He educates his two nephews, Cloudesley Mornington and Thurston Willcoxen, and helps a good many others besides."

"I don't care! I don't care, Miss Mary! *He* got plenty! An' he's yer own flesh an' blood. An' I were you I'd take my chile, an' I'd go to Luckenough, an' I'd sit right down on top o' Old Nick Waugh for the rest o' my days!—*that* I would! 'deed me! Case he daren't 'ny you the shelter of his ruff, no way, an' you a lady, an' his 'lation, too."

"Why, do you really suppose I could do such a dishonorable, bold, obtrusive thing as that, Jenny? I would starve to death first."

"Well, chile, everybody to their tastes. I shouldn't 'fer to starve *my*self. Deed me! Well! anyhow, here's a 'pistle de Commodore sont yer."

"A letter! Why you never said a word about having a letter for me!"

"Lor', chile, to be sure. Why what you think I come all de way over her' if it wa'n't for to bring a letter or—somet'in'?" said Jenny, fumbling in her bosom, and producing the missive

"And why didn't you give it to me before?"

"Oh! taint no quinsequonce! I know'd it wur nuffin' but about Miss Edy's goin' an' marryin' o' the Britisher! Sure he don't do nuffin' 'tall but talk about it, an' write about it, an' I thought how I'd jest leave you finish your breakfast 'fore I sturved your mind wid sich!" said Jenny, with a shrug.

Mrs. L'Oiseau was devouring the contents of the letter, which ran thus—

"Mary, My Dear! I feel as if I had somewhat neglected you, but, the truth is, my arm is not long enough to stretch from Luckenough to Old Fields. That being the case, and myself and Old Hen being rather lonesome since Edith's ungrateful desertion, we beg you to take little Jacko, and come and live with us as long as we may live—and of what may come after *that* we will talk at some other time. If you will be ready I will send the carriage for you on Saturday.

"Your Uncle Nick."

Mrs. L'Oiseau read this letter with a changing cheek—when she finished it she folded and laid it aside in silence. As her humble old friend, Jenny, knew nothing of its contents, she did not feel quite justified in informing her just yet.

"It *was* about Miss Edy's going away, wa'n't it, Miss Mary?"

"Yes."

"*I* knowed it!"

Here the conversation dropped. And, Jenny, after kindly remaining "to clear up the breakfast things," took her leave and her departure.

Then Mary called to her side her child—her Jacquelina—her Sans Souci—as for her gay, thoughtless temper she was called. I should here describe the mother and daughter to you. The mother needs little description—a pale, black-haired, black-eyed woman, who should have been blooming and sprightly, but that care had damped her spirits, and cankered the roses in her cheeks.

But Jacquelina—Sans Souci—merits a better portrait.

She was small and slight for her years, and, though really near nine, would have been taken for six or seven. She was fair-skinned, blue-eyed and golden-haired. And her countenance, full of spirit, courage, and audacity. As she would dart her face upward towards the sun, her round, smooth, highly polished white forehead would seem to laugh in light between its clustering curls of burnished gold, that, together with the little, slightly turned up nose, and short, slightly protruded upper lip, gave the charm of inexpressible archness to the most mischievous countenance alive. In fact her whole form, features, expression, and gestures seemed instinct with mischief—mischief lurked in the kinked tendrils of her bright hair; mischief looked out and laughed in the merry, malicious blue eyes; mischief crept slyly over the bows of her curbed and ruby lips; and mischief played at hide and seek among the rosy dimples of her blooming cheeks.

Her eager, restless spirit gave a startling quickness, abruptness, and eccentricity to all her motions; yet such was the ineffable grace of every movement, uniting smoothness with swiftness, that she reminded the beholder of some beautiful bird or frolicsome kid.

She seldom walked, but ran or darted like a lap-wing—with this peculiarity—her figure leaning forward, and her bright head dipping downward in the swiftness of her flight.

She would generally impress you with two distinct feelings.

When she happened to be *still*—with the idea of danger, as in the proximity of gunpowder, an evil spirit, or, at the very least, of a most artful and dangerous monkey, whose devices it were impossible to foresee, or forestall.

And when she chanced to be active, she inspired you with the hunter's instinct to chase, catch, and delight in her capture, just as if she had been some wild bird darting from bush to bush, or some wanton doe abandoning herself to a delirium of play. Upon the present occasion, Madam L'Oiseau found Sans Souci swinging up and down upon the lowest limber branch of the old elm that overshadowed the house. She called her in, and with scarcely restrained joy, communicated to her the contents of her uncle's note, and the vague hopes of future inheritance they inspired—concluding with,

"Now, Jacquelina, you must cure yourself of these hoydenish tricks of yours before you expose them to your uncle—remember how whimsical and eccentric he is."

"So am I! Just as whimsical! I'll do him dirt," said the young lady.

"Good Heaven! Where did you ever pick up such a phrase, and what upon earth does doing any one 'dirt' mean?" asked the very much shocked lady.

"I mean I'll grind his nose on the ground, I'll hurry him and worry him, and upset him, and cross him, and make him run his head against the wall, and butt his blundering brains out. What did he turn Fair Edith away for? Oh! *I'll* pay him off! *I'll* settle with him! Fair Edith shan't be in *his* debt for her injuries very long."

From her pearly brow and pearly cheeks, "Fair Edith" was the name by which the child had heard her cousin once called, and she had called her thus ever since.

Mrs. L'Oiseau answered gravely,

"Your uncle gave Edith a fair choice between his own love and protection, and the great benefits he had in store for her, and the love of a stranger and foreigner, whom he disapproved and hated. Edith deliberately chose the latter. And your uncle had a perfect right to act upon her unwise decision."

"And for my part *I know he hadn't*—all of my own thoughts. Oh! I'll do him—"

"Hush! Jacquelina. You shall *not* use such expressions. So much comes of my letting you have your own way, running down to the beach and watching the boats, and hearing the vulgar talk of the fishermen."

"I know a tall young waterman—
I know a handsome waterman—
I know a jolly waterman
That sails upon the sea!"

sang the fairy, shaking her golden curls in the greatest glee.

She had a most beautiful voice, that gave an ineffable charm even to the most common-place words and air.

"There! oh, Mary! just listen to her! all sorts of low songs and catches! Well! thank Heaven, all this will be changed when you get to Luckenough! Dear me, I can hardly realize that we are going there. I *don't* realize it at all. It will be a very great change. Well, thank Heaven, at any rate it will be nearer the church, and we shall have the use of a carriage, and can go every Sunday. And, perhaps, your uncle will send you to school or get a teacher for you into the house. And who knows but he will make *you* his heiress, Jacquelina! You must try to please him."

"I'd as soon try to please Old Satan! And all to get his money, too! Do you think *I'd* try to cut Fair Edith out? Oh! Mimmy!"

"Don't say 'cut-out,' that is low, too; say *undermine*—but it will not be undermining Edith. She has already, through her foolish attachment to that young man, lost her inheritance."

"I don't think Fair Edith was foolish at all. *He* was nice, and he wore, oh! such a beautiful coat! And I don't wonder Fair Edith loved him. For, indeed, I loved him myself. And I shall tell uncle so, too, if he asks *me*."

"You'll spoil your fortune, that I see plainly enough, if I let you go on so."

"I'll spoil uncle's notion of *his*. He shan't think his fortune is everything to bribe everybody to do everything he pleases, right or wrong!" answered the willful elf, with that graceful dip of her head, as she suddenly darted out of the doors and ran—no one knew whither—it was one of her tricks.

"Sans Souci" was an excessively fascinating, and, therefore, a thoroughly spoiled child. Her willfulness had such courage and candor and honesty in it—and such a witching grace, as disarmed her very gravest mentors. This was unfortunate, as her willfulness was impulsive rather than obstinate, and by steady, firm, and gentle discipline, might have been overcome, or, at least, modified and guided. As it was, it was cultivated until it grew and flourished a very strong weed in the garden of her soul—often graceful and beautiful, it is true, but also noxious to the health of all the flowers of beauty and goodness implanted by God and nature there. Do not blame my poor little "Careless"—blame her mother, her pastors and masters, if you please, but not herself too much. Life lay before her with its awful chastisements. And be sure that the plant of bitterness that might have been so easily drawn up from the yielding soil of her child-bosom, but had been permitted to strike deep, strong roots in her heart, would be uprooted and torn forth some time by the hand of life, though the lacerated bosom should bleed itself to death.

On Saturday, at the hour specified, the carriage came to Old Field Cottage, and conveyed Mrs. L'Oiseau and her child to Luckenough. They were very kindly received by the Commodore, and affectionately embraced by Henrietta, who conducted them to a pleasant room, where they could lay off their bonnets, and which they were thenceforth to consider as their own apartment. This was not the one which had been occupied by Edith. Edith's chamber had been left undisturbed and locked up by Mrs. Waugh, and was kept ever after sacred to her memory.

The sojourn of Mrs. L'Oiseau and Jacquelina at Luckenough was an experiment on the part of the Commodore. He did not mean to commit himself hastily, as in the case of his sudden choice of Edith as his heiress. He intended to take a good, long time for what he called "mature deliberation"—often one of the greatest enemies to upright, generous, and disinterested action—to hope, faith, and charity, that I know of, by the way. Commodore Waugh also determined to have his own will in all things, this time at least. He had the vantage ground now, and was resolved to keep it. He had caught Sans Souci *young*, before she could possibly have formed even a childish predilection for one of the opposite sex, and he was determined to raise and educate a wife for his beloved Grim'. Grim' could certainly wait six or seven years for the sake of a great estate and a young wife, and in six or seven years the child of nine would be marriageable, he thought—his wish, of course, "was father to *that* thought." And in the meantime he resolved to keep such a watch over Jacquelina, that no fascinating young officer, nor anybody else, should run away with *her* heart. And all these counsels he kept to himself—not trusting even Henrietta with them. He sent Jacquelina to school at C——. She went every morning on a pony, with a servant to attend her, and to remain in the village all day, and to bring her home at night. This continued through the summer and fall, but towards winter, when the roads began to be very bad, it was necessarily discontinued. It was a part of Commodore Waugh's plan not to send Sans Souci away from home, or to let her out of his own surveillance. Therefore upon the enforced suspension of her attendance at school, he was very much embarrassed as to how he should proceed with her education. At length a bright thought struck him. Professor Grimshaw had lately returned to C—— Academy, after an absence of several months. Dr. Grimshaw would, doubtless, resume his semi-weekly visits to Luckenough, for no bad weather or bad roads had ever yet deterred him. Well! when next Grim' came to the house, Old Nick would let him somewhat into his plans, and engage him upon every visit to set lessons to Jacquelina, which she should learn in the intervals, and to take the general supervision of her education. The longer he contemplated this plan the better he liked it, and the more he improved it. Dr. Grimshaw should also be Jacquelina's escort from church every Sunday, when he usually accompanied the family home to dinner. And *this* was the way he should manage *that*. Jacquelina should no longer go with himself and his wife in the carriage—she should ride the pony, and as Grim' also always rode horseback, he would thus be obliged to escort the only equestrian female of the party. Oh, *he* knew how to manage, he chuckled to himself! he would so betimes accustom Sans Souci to Grim' that she would not be able to do without him, and so drill her into the idea that he was to be her future husband, that she should not be able to dream of anybody else in that relation. Meanwhile the Commodore became very fond of his little "Thoughtless," and she began to like her uncle's petting and caressing so much as to forget her resolution "to pay him for his behavior to Edith," and took no unusual pains to annoy him. But, alas, without any painstaking, and by merely following out her impulses, Sans Souci annoyed the old man excessively. And his troubles increased in proportion with his love for the hare-brained child. For one thing, she was incessantly running herself into danger, that kept her self-constituted guardian in perpetual tremors. Then she was always starting forbidden subjects, or making terribly unfortunate speeches, which always shocked Henrietta, enraged the Commodore, and kept her poor mother on the *qui vive.*

For instance, after her first night at Luckenough, in the morning, at breakfast, her uncle asked her,

"Well, Flibbertigibbet! how did you like your hammock and quarters?"

"Hammock and quarters?"

"Yes, your bed and your room, I mean?"

"Oh! why, not at all! it was very large and gloomy—it smelt dreadfully damp and musty, and the rats and mice ran about in the walls so much, that I could not sleep a wink! Say, uncle, mother says you may leave this old house to me, when you die. Now, please *don't*, for indeed I wouldn't live in it for anything in the world, and if ever you give it to me, I shall just set fire to it and burn it down, as sure as you do!"

Here was an explosion! The Commodore darted a look of rage at poor Mrs. L'Oiseau, who blushed violently, and faltered out that she had only meant to bribe Jacquelina into being a good girl—that she, for herself, desired and expected nothing of the sort, of course—heaven forbid! The Commodore would not affront a lady, and his relative, at his own board. He gulped down his anger as he could, and abruptly rose from his seat, and left the table. And it was some time before he recovered his serenity.

Mrs. L'Oiseau led her child to her own room, and commenced a tearful expostulation with her upon the subject of her habitual thoughtlessness, and the continual mischief that it caused. Sans Souci gazed at her mother in the utmost amazement.

"Why, mother, what did I say? How should it have made such trouble?"

Mrs. L'Oiseau attempted to make her understand. In vain!

"I only repeated your own words, Mimmy—how could they have been improper?"

And upon one particular Sabbath day, Sans Souci fell into an unprecedented number of mistakes and misfortunes. The whole family at Luckenough, with the exception of herself, had remained at home, but she was sent to church for the whole day in charge of Doctor Grimshaw, who was one of the teachers of the Sunday-school. And the restless fairy had felt herself dreadfully bored by the long catechism lessons of the morning, the longer service and sermon of the forenoon, and the repetition of the whole matter in the afternoon. So she arrived home in the evening thoroughly exasperated by the confinement and discipline of the day. She met the family circle at the supper table. Doctor Grimshaw, after having brought her home, had departed.

"Well, Jacko! who did you see at church?" asked her uncle, pinching her ear.

"Jacko" twitched herself away, impatiently exclaiming,

"All the people! Such a dismal looking set! I don't want to go there again! I wont, neither! There, now!"

"Why, Monkey, I'm sure Doctor Grimshaw is a very pleasant looking gentleman!"

"No he isn't, neither! He is worse than all the rest! a long-legged, black old Ogre! He tired me to death with hard questions at the Sunday-school. He made me learn 'The Seven Deadly Sins' before he would let me go out!" exclaimed Jacquelina, indignantly.

"Well, but, Lapwing! didn't he reward you for it? Didn't he give you those pretty pictures I saw you put between the leaves of your mass book?" inquired Mrs. Henrietta.

"S'pose I did, I put them there to get them out of my sight. Pretty pictures, indeed! They are not pretty at all! Ugly things. Sorrowful women shrouded in black, with the whites of their eyes turned up! And horrid old men in ugly hoods, with skulls and cross-bones before them! Pretty? Ugh!" exclaimed Jacquelina, shuddering.

"My dear child, it is very sinful in you to talk in that way—they were pictures of blessed saints and holy hermits," said Mrs. L'Oiseau.

"Were they? Well, now, how was I to know they were blessed and holy, when they looked so wicked and miserable?"

"Oh, my child, my child, couldn't you read the inscriptions under them?"

"No, how could I? They were in Dutch!"

"In Latin, my dear! In Latin! the universal language of the church."

"Well, it's all one to me, who don't know a word of what it means—only I know it all makes me sad and angry, and I dreadfully hate 'The Seven Deadly Sins,' and black shrouds and turned up eyes, and skulls and cross-bones—I do! There!"

"What is the next lesson you have to learn in the catechism!"

"Why *you* know just what comes next—the 'Four Sins that cry to Heaven for Vengeance.' And Doctor Grimshaw said if I would learn them well by next Sunday, he would give me another picture. And he showed it to me. It was another blessed picture of a man roasting on a gridiron!" exclaimed Sans Souci, as near bursting into tears as the fairy could be. "But I wont learn the 'Four Sins that cry to Heaven for Vengeance' to please nobody—indeed wont I! and then to have a premium of a man roasting on a gridiron! It makes my head open and shut to think about it! And I can't stand it no how, indeed can't I, that's flat! I wish I was a boy, and

I'd run away and seek my fortune like Jack, that I would! Cloudy Morning, *he's* going to sea, he says. And if people don't leave me be, with their skulls and cross-bones, and roasted men, I'll put myself in boy's clothes and run away, and be a sailor, too! that I will!"

The Commodore roared with laughter—he always did at Sans Souci's willfulness, when it did not come in contact with his own.

But the tears rushed to Mrs. L'Oiseau's eyes, and she began to expostulate, saying,

"Oh, my dear, my dear little girl, don't, don't talk so rudely and violently. I know, of course, you never in the world could do anything like that, but still, don't talk of such horrid things, my dear. You must be sweet, and gentle and docile, like the dear little children of the Nuns' school that you saw in church to-day."

"What were they all dressed in white for, Mimmy?" asked Jacquelina, curiously.

"Why, their white dresses were emblematic of their spotless innocence."

"Umph—hum! I know now. And—were the black dresses of the nuns emblematic of the—*other?*"

"Oh, you wicked child! No, they wear black as a badge of their retirement from the world, and their devotion to heaven."

"Is black the favorite color in heaven, Mimmy?"

"Jacquelina, I have heard it said that a child can ask more questions in a minute than a sage can answer in a century, and I believe it."

"And that's what you so often tell me, Mimmy! Nobody ever *did* answer *all* my questions, and take pains to give me satisfaction, except Fair Edith! but then there were few like *her!* Sorrow the day she went away!"

The master of the house, who had been laughing until this moment, now suddenly changed his countenance, laid down his knife and fork, and looking sternly at his little niece, said, "That is a name I never permit to be mentioned by any one under this roof!"

Sans Souci pursed up her lips, and stretched her eyes.

"Indeed!" she said. "That's mighty unlucky now! because I had rather talk about Fair Edith than repeat the prettiest verses, and I'm sure I shall never remember to forget her."

"You had better do so, Miss, I assure you," said the Commodore.

"Oh! Jacquelina!" exclaimed her mother, in a low, anxious voice.

"Now, uncle, and now Mimmy, s'pose I *was* to forget to talk about Fair Edith, *that* wouldn't prevent other people from talking, and they *do* talk a plenty now, I tell you!"

The Commodore pricked up his ears—he was rather sensitive to public opinion. Jacquelina was quick to perceive it—she went on maliciously,

"Yes! they were talking about it in church, between the morning and the afternoon services, to-day."

"Humph! Impudent, meddlesome fools! As if it were the least consequence to *me* what *they* thought or said! But who were they then, Monkey?"

"I don't know! Gentlemen, I s'pose. Some of the Big Wigs, as Cloudy Morning calls them, I reckon."

"Humph! Rascals! And what were they saying, Worthless? Not that I care, of course! but what was it?"

"Why, they all agreed that you were an old brute, to behave as you did to Fair Edith Lance. But that it was just like you—that you always were an ugly old beast, every way!"

"What! they abused your uncle before your face?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you are a ready-witted little wretch! Your tongue has quite a sharp edge to it! What did you say in my defence?"

"Nothing at all!"

"And why not, Jackanapes? or Jill-anapes! why not?"

"Because I knew they were telling the truth!"

"*What!*"

"Oh, my dear!" cried Mrs. L'Oiseau.

"Never mind. Let her talk! Her tongue will cut off her head yet."

"No, uncle, it will only cut off my inheritance," said Jacquelina, who, child as she was, had thoroughly learned the meaning of *that* phrase.

This shocked them all into silence for a little while, and then the Commodore spoke again.

"And pray, Miss, am I to understand that you also think me a brute, to act as I did in the case of Edith?"

Sans Souci stretched her eyes to the widest extent, in sincere astonishment, and after a little pause, replied,

"Why, uncle, *to be sure I do!* What *could* I think but the truth?"

"There goes the very last hope of an inheritance," thought Mrs. L'Oiseau, as she arose from the table in great distress, and apologizing for her child's rashness as well as she could, led her away to their room, and sitting down upon the bed, began to sob.

"Oh, my child! my dear! my Jacquelina! You have ruined yourself—and you'll be sent back, with your mother, to starve, at Old Fields—or at the very best, to grow up in ignorance and poverty!"

"Don't cry, Mimmy! *I'm* not afraid!"

"Oh, Sans Sauci! Sans Souci! Well might your poor father call you Sans Souci!'"

"Mother, what *is* the meaning of Sans Souci? Is it *Saint Susan?*"

"No, my poor dear, nor *Sane* Susan neither, you poor little goose."

"What is it then, and why am I called so?"

"Because it is just what you are—one 'without care'—'without thought.' I'm sure you deserve the name? Oh, Sans Souci! Sans Souci! you've ruined us both! I don't mind for myself, but you, child, you!"

"Don't cry, Mimmy! I'm not a bit afraid! Lord! he can't do without me! I make him laugh—nobody else ever does."

"There's something in that, maybe. But you must be very polite and attentive to Professor Grimshaw; you must try to please him—because he is a great favorite with your uncle."

"And *I'm* a great favorite with *him*, Mimmy! And if he would only stop teaching me the seven deadly sins and the rest of it, I should like him so much!"

"Who, *Professor Grimshaw*, my dear?"

"Yes, Mimmy."

"I was afraid you didn't like him?"

"Oh! but I *do!* he is so stiff and solemn and dark and lantern-jawed—and so comical looking—and so like the picture of the Ogre, in the fairy tales, that I can't help laughing every time I look at him! And he likes *me*, too, only he never laughs at me; he never laughs at all—now that is so funny."

"It is because he has got a grave, serious sort of character. You must try to be serious, *too*. This is a very serious *world*, we live in."

"Now, Mimmy, I think it is the very funniest world that ever was heard of!"

"Be *serious*, my child! this is a very serious *life* we lead. And you must try to please a serious *man* like Professor Grimshaw, by attending to serious *things*—the sermons that you hear, for instance! Now I'll warrant Dr. Grimshaw, if he should come to-morrow, would ask you about the sermon to-day. And I'm afraid you could not tell him one word of it."

"I had reason to mind it!"

"I'm glad to hear it; but what was it that fixed your attention so, my dear?"

"Why, that about it's being always Sunday in Heaven—*just such a Sunday as this, only more so!*"

"The saint's everlasting rest—one eternal Sabbath!"

"Yes! I know—but—"

"What? Jacquelina!"

"If that's the case it's going to be very dull up there! *And I'd a heap liefer go to t'other place!*"

So much for poor Sans Souci's lessons in English grammar and church catechism!

More than six months had passed since the arrival of Jacquelina at Luckenough. It was now mid-winter, and the snow lay nearly two feet deep around the old mansion-house, and the naked trees of the forest stood out stiff and stark in black tracery against the leaden back-ground of the sky. The roads were in such a condition, as to nearly preclude the possibility of traveling. No one came and went between Luckenough and the rest of the world, except Doctor Grimshaw, and sometimes Cloudesley Mornington. The excitement of the Christmas holidays had passed, and all life was rather lifeless at Luckenough.

Jacquelina was, however, a wholesome irritant, and kept the people from dying of torpor. In and out of the house almost every instant; keeping the doors banging, and the wind driving through the old passages and parlors, to the great detriment of the invalid soldier; all over the plantation, and through every negro quarter; upon the tops of sheds and barns and corn-houses; out into the forest, and up into the highest branches of the dry, bare trees, upon no other errand than that of mischief and danger; sliding upon the frozen forest stream, into which she often broke and fell, with no more fatal consequences than a douse in the ice water, and a run home in stiff, frozen clothes; clambering upon the backs of unbroken colts, and holding on their manes for a bridle, and riding them until they threw her into the snow—getting herself once tossed by the bull, and saved only by falling into a deep drift—in short, going everywhere, and doing everything that could keep her friends on a perpetual rack of anxiety, was little Sans Souci!

And the more the sprite tormented and tortured her friends, the better they seemed to love her. This was especially the case with the Commodore. Nothing could exceed his care for the child. He charged every servant on the premises with the duty of looking after her, and keeping her in sight, and out of danger, threatening each one separately with the most awful visitations of his wrath, if any harm came to Miss Jacquelina L'Oiseau. And a precious time the servants had of it, particularly old Jenny, who was the regularly appointed nurse or maid of the young lady. Jenny declared it her private belief, that she should not live out half her remaining days for chasing after "that there little limb."

"Where is the little wretch now?" asked the Commodore, one day when the family were about to sit down to dinner. "Where is she? Call Jenny!"

And when Jenny was called, and came in, gray and breathless with fear—

"Where is Miss Jacquelina?" he asked.

"Done clome up de top o' de hemlock, ole Marse, honey! 'deed is de chile. I couldn't 'vent her to save my precious life. An' now one o' de branches done broke, an' she can't get down again. 'Deed it wa'n't no fault o' me, ole Marse, chile! Nobody can't do a single thing long o' dat young gal, dey can't, in——"

Jenny broke off suddenly, and dodged in time to escape the pitcher that old Nick hurled at her head, as he started up from the table, and, without hat or overcoat, rushed out into the wintry weather.

He ran, puffing and blowing, to the old hemlock, that stood at the farthest extremity of the front lawn.

"Oh, you little vixen! Oh, you little wretch! You—you little imp, you! Wont I give it to you when I get you down?" gasped the old man, as he reached the spot, and stood panting for breath, and suffocating like a stranded whale.

"Hold out your arms and catch me, uncle; I am going to jump!" she exclaimed, her malicious blue eyes scintillating laughter as she swung up and down upon the fragile branch.

"STOP! STOP! Do, if you dare, you little infernal machine! Wait till I get a ladder!" cried the Commodore, bursting into a sweat of terror.

"Quick! uncle! Here I come!" she exclaimed, swinging up, and flinging out her arms for a flying leap.

He had just time to extend his own arms and receive her as she came—he so weak with his fright that her weight overthrew him, and he fell and rolled over in the snow, she uppermost, clinging to him, convulsed with laughter. He picked himself up, groaned, rubbed his joints, and then seized and shook the little mischief out of breath, and dragged her along home to his wife. He entered the house, vociferating,

"Old Hen! Old Hen, I say! Come, here! What the fiend shall I do with this little abomination? I have the greatest mind to whip her to death! Little panic that she is —she's worse than ten Ediths—yes! than ten thousand Ediths! Girls are an insupportable nuisance! And I vow I would discard them all forever, and adopt one of my nephews for my heir, only that Grim' can't marry my nephew! And I am resolved Grim' shall succeed me at Luckenough."

"Well, why not bequeath it to Grim' unconditionally?"

"No! it mustn't go out of the family. But don't bother me about that, Old Hen! I don't want to talk about *that.* I want to know what to do with this little imp of Satan! Little wretch that she is! I swear, I've lost a hundred pounds of flesh since she's been in this house! She frets my nerves to fiddle strings—my coat hangs on me like a shirt on a marlin spike! I *know* she'll finally be the death of me! she'll bring on a stroke of apoplexy or palsy! She has already put me through such a course of panics, anxieties, terrors and palpitations, that I am as nervous as a hysterical girl! Now just take her away and lock her up in the dark closet without her dinner. Do it!"

Henrietta led the little offender off, but not to meet the fate to which she had been sentenced.

Sans Souci, hanging her head down, not in mortification, but in the deep study of some new mischief—some plan by which she could "pay Uncle Nick off for this."

Henrietta entered her own bed-room, and sitting down, lifted Jacquelina to her lap, embraced her, smoothed the tangled curls of her bright hair, laid the tired, mischief-brewing little head against her own soft, cushiony bosom, looked lovingly, seriously in the mischievous little face, and beginning with.

"My *dear* child—my sweet little Lina—" entered upon a rather long lecture about the beauty of docility, propriety and obedience.

Sans Souci appeared to listen with the utmost attention, only sometimes her eyelids swayed heavily, as if they would close in sleep. But, upon the whole, Mrs. Waugh had every reason to suppose that she was producing a very serious impression upon the little creature, whose eyes were towards the last fixed upon hers with great earnestness. Jacquelina was evidently full of some thought.

"Aunty!" she said, when Mrs. Henrietta had finished the lecture, and was reposing upon her laurels. "Aunty!" looking solemnly in the lady's face.

"What, my dear?"

"Do you know the white kitten's eyes are open—and it ain't but eight days old! Indeed they are! You can see them yourself if you go in the barn. *I'm* going now!" And Sans Souci jumped up, darted through the door like a bird with spread wings, and in a twinkling was seen flying across the lawn.

Mrs. Henrietta sighed deeply, and arose and left the room.

So the elf escaped confinement upon that occasion. But the next day she fell into so many unpardonable disorders, that for the first time in her life, she found herself actually imprisoned in the long threatened "dark closet," the dark closet in the disused parlor, and where Mrs. Waugh kept her choicest jellies and sweetmeats.

Cloudesley Mornington, who happened to be spending the day at Luckenough, was extremely indignant at what he called "this outrage," "this tyranny." He would say little, of course, but as soon as the parlor was vacated, he went into it and sat down at the outside of Sans Souci's prison door, telling her not to grieve, that he meant to stay there until she was released, if it were all night—telling her how much *he* liked her, and what a good girl she was, and what an old brute her uncle was, and offering to tell her stories and sing her songs to while away the hours of captivity.

But Sans Souci was incurable—she grieved without limit.

"Don't cry, Linny! Linny, don't cry, they'll hear you, you know! And *I* wouldn't let them hear *me* if *I* were you. I wouldn't let them think I cared so much about it, not I!"

It was no use! Sans Souci wept and wailed without ceasing. At last a bright thought struck Cloudesley. He put his lips to the keyhole and whispered,

"Linny! listen! Don't cry!—*eat the sweetmeats!*"

"And so I will, Cloudy!" said the little captive, and suddenly the tears and sobs ceased, and Sans Souci became very still, while Cloudesley sat down chuckling. Soon after he took "Esop's Fables" from his pocket and began to read to her And she listened and ate—sometimes stopping to say,

"This citron is very nice—I wish I could put some out to you, Cloudy;" or "this ginger is jamb! I wish you had some!"

To which he would answer,

"Never mind—I had a great deal rather you ate it."

So he continued to read and comment on what he read, and to joke, and she listened and laughed, and ate preserves until the afternoon had passed. And then her talk grew shorter and shorter, until she ceased saying anything of her own accord. And then her replies to him grew indistinct and wide of the subject. And, lastly, from her utter silence, he knew that the child had fallen asleep. Still he sat and kept guard, that she might not waken and find herself alone. When it grew dark, and he heard some one coming, he slipped out at one door as Mrs. Waugh entered by the other. The lady brought a candle and a key, and opened the closet door to release her prisoner.

And there she found Sans Souci sound asleep among the rifled sweetmeat jars!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLIGHTED HEART.

"Oh! fate, how could thy vengeance light
So bitterly on one so bright?
How could the hand that gave such charms
Blast them again in love's own arms?"—*Moore.*

In February, the deepest snow storm fell that had fallen during the whole winter. The roads were considered quite impassable by carriages, and the family at Luckenough were blocked up in their old house. Yet one day, in the midst of this "tremendous state of affairs," as the Commodore called it, a messenger from Benedict arrived at Luckenough, the bearer of a letter to Mrs. Waugh, which he refused to entrust to any other hands but that lady's own. He was, therefore, shown into the presence of the mistress, to whom he presented the note. Mrs. Waugh took it and looked at it with some curiosity—it was superscribed in a slight feminine hand—quite new to Henrietta; and she opened it, and turned immediately to the signature—MARIAN MAYFIELD—a strange name to her; she had never seen or heard it before. She lost no more time in perusing the letter, but as she read, her cheek flushed and paled—her agitation became excessive, she was obliged to ring for a glass of water, and as soon as she had swallowed it, she crushed and thrust the letter into her bosom, ordered her mule to be saddled instantly, and her riding pelisse and hood to be brought. And in fifteen minutes, without a word of explanation to any one, she was seated on her beast, and attended by the messenger, mounted upon another mule—the only kind of animal that could stand these dreadful roads—set forward towards B——. The Commodore, who saw her depart, fancied that she was bound on some little errand of mercy (not an unusual thing with the good woman) in the immediate neighborhood. In the meantime, Henrietta put her mule to its utmost speed, and in two hours and a half reached the village, and alighted at the little hotel. Of the landlord, who came forth respectfully to meet her, she demanded to be shown immediately to the presence of the young lady who had recently arrived from abroad. The host bowed, and inviting the lady to follow him, led the way to the little private parlor, the door of which he opened to let the visitor pass in, and then bowing again, he closed it and retired.

And Mrs. Waugh found herself in a small, half-darkened room, where, reclining in an easy chair, sat—*Edith?* *Was* it Edith? *Could* it be Edith? That fair phantom of a girl to whom the black ringlets and black dress alone seemed to give outline and personality? Yes! it was Edith! But oh! so changed! so wan and transparent, with such blue shadows in the hollows of her eyes and temples and cheeks—with such heavy, heavy eyelids, seemingly dragged down by the weight of their long, sleeping lashes—with such anguish in the gaze of the melting dark eyes!

"Edith, my love! My dearest Edith!" said Mrs. Waugh, going to her.

She half arose, and sunk speechless into the kind arms opened to receive her. Mrs. Waugh held her to her bosom a moment in silence, and then said,

"Edith, my dear, I got a note from your friend, Miss Mayfield, saying that you had returned, and wished to see me. But how is this, my child? You have evidently been very ill—you are still. Where is your husband, Edith? Edith, where is your husband?"

A shiver that shook her whole frame—a choking, gasping sob, was all the answer she could make.

"Where is he, Edith? Ordered away somewhere, upon some distant service? That is hard, but never mind! Hope for the best! You will meet him again, dear? But where is he, then?"

She lifted up her poor head, and uttering—"Dead! dead!" dropped it heavily again upon the kind, supporting bosom.

"You do not mean it! My dear, you do not mean it! You do not know what you are saying! Dead! when? how?" asked Mrs. Waugh, in great trouble.

"Shot! shot!" whispered the poor thing, in a tone so hollow, it seemed reverberating through a vault. And then her stricken head sunk heavily down—and Henrietta perceived that strength and consciousness had utterly departed. She placed her in the easy-chair, and turned around to look for restoratives, when a door leading into an adjoining bed-room opened, and a young girl entered, and came quietly and quickly forward to the side of the sufferer. She greeted Mrs. Waugh politely, and then gave her undivided attention to Edith, whose care she seemed fully competent to undertake.

This young girl was not over fourteen years of age, yet the most beautiful and blooming creature, Mrs. Waugh thought, that she had ever beheld. A perfect Hebe! A richly developing form, softly flushed over with the roseate hue of pure blood, that deepened and brightened to a fine carnation bloom on her cheeks and lips—a rich growth of golden-bronzed hair that rippled in a thousand glittering wavelets over the superb head, and turned into a ringlet wherever a tress escaped the comb that confined the burnished mass into a knot behind—a pair of fine, dark, clear blue eyes, full of sweetness and candor—a luxuriant exuberance of vitality glowing over the whole form and face—glowing without heat, glowing with a dewy coolness, like a blooming damask rose in the morning—an expression of kindness, cheerfulness, confidence and strength pervading her whole appearance—such was Marian Mayfield!

Her presence in the room seemed at once to dispel the gloom and shadow.

She took Edith's hand, and settled her more at ease in the chair—but refused the cologne and the sal-ammoniac that Mrs. Waugh produced, saying, cheerfully,

"She has not fainted, you perceive—she breathes—it is better to leave her to nature for a while—too much attention worries her—she is very weak."

Marian had now settled her comfortably back in the resting-chair, and stood by her side, not near enough to in the least incommode her.

"I do not understand all this. She says that her husband is dead, poor child—how came it about? Tell me!" said Mrs. Waugh, in a low voice.

"Marian's clear blue eyes filled with tears, but she dropped their white lids and long black lashes over them, and would not let them fall; and her ripe lips quivered, but she firmly compressed them, and remained silent for a moment. Then she said, in a whisper,

"I will tell you by-and-by," and she glanced at Edith, to intimate that the story must not be rehearsed in her presence, however insensible she might appear to be.

"You are the young lady who wrote to me?"

"Yes, madam."

"You are a friend of my poor girl's?"

"Something more than that, madam—I will tell you by-and-by," said Marian, and her kind, dear eyes were again turned upon Edith, and observing the latter slightly move, she said, in her pleasant voice,

"Edith, dear, shall I put you to bed—are you able to walk?"

"Yes, yes, murmured the sufferer, turning her head uneasily from side to side.

Marian gave her hand, and assisted the poor girl to rise, and tenderly supported her as she walked to the bed-room.

Mrs. Waugh arose to give her assistance, but Marian shook her head at her, with a kindly look, that seemed to say, "Do not startle her—she is used only to me lately," and bore her out of sight into the bed-room.

Presently she reappeared in the little parlor, opened the blinds, drew back the curtains, and let the sunlight into the dark room. Then she ordered more wood to the fire, and when it was replenished, and the servant had left the room, she invited Mrs. Waugh to draw her chair to the hearth, and then said,

"I am ready now, madam, to tell you anything you wish to know—indeed I had supposed that you were acquainted with everything relating to Edith's marriage, and its fatal results."

"I know absolutely nothing but what I have learned to-day. We never received a single letter, or message, or news of any kind, or in any shape, from Edith or her husband, from the day they left us until now."

Marian's bosom heaved, her lips quivered, and a large tear trembled a moment on her dark lashes, and then rolled slowly down her damask cheek—a dew-drop on a rose. She calmly wiped it away, and then drawing a deep breath, said,

"You did not hear, then, that he was court-martialed, and—sentenced to death?"

"No, no—good Heaven, no!"

"He was tried for mutiny or rebellion—I know not which—but it was for raising arms against his superior officers while here in America—the occasion was—but you know the occasion better than I do."

"Yes, yes, it was when he rescued Edith from the violence of Thorg and his men. But oh! Heaven, how horrible! that he should have been condemned to death for a noble act! It is incredible—impossible—how could it have happened? He never expected such a fate—none of us did, or we would never have consented to his return. There seemed no prospect of such a thing. How *could* it have been?"

"There was *treachery*, and perhaps perjury, too. He had an insidious and unscrupulous enemy, who assumed the guise of repentance, and candor, and friendship, the better to lure him into his toils—it was the infamous Colonel Thorg, who received the command of the regiment, in reward for his great services in America. And Michael's only powerful friend, who could and would have saved him—was dead. General Ross, you are aware, was killed in the battle of Baltimore."

"God have mercy on poor Edith! How long has it been since this happened, my dear girl?"

"When they reached Toronto, in Canada West, the regiment commanded by Thorg was about to sail for England. On its arrival at York, in England, a court-martial was formed, and Michael was brought to trial. There was a great deal of personal prejudice, distortion of facts, and even perjury—in short, he was condemned and sentenced one day, and led out and shot the next!"

There was silence between them then. Henrietta sat in pale and speechless horror.

And Marian's bosom was heaving vehemently, and she was pressing her hands first upon her face and then upon her breast, as if to command down the strong emotion.

"But how long is it since my poor Edith has been so awfully widowed?" at length inquired Mrs. Waugh.

"Nearly four months," replied Marian, in a tremulous voice. "For six weeks succeeding his death, she was not able to rise from her bed. I came from school to nurse her. I found her completely prostrate under the blow. I wonder she had not died. What power of living on some delicate frames seem to have. As soon as she was able to sit up, I began to think that it would be better to remove her from the strange country, the theatre of her dreadful sufferings, and to bring her to her own native land, among her own friends and relatives, where she might resume the life and habits of her girlhood, and where, with nothing to remind her of her loss, she might gradually come to look upon the few wretched months of her marriage, passed in England, as a dark dream. Therefore I have brought her back."

Mrs. Waugh looked and listened with the deepest interest, mingled with astonishment, at the young girl—so childlike, yet so womanly—so youthful, yet so wise and prudent.

"And you, my dear child," said she "you were Michael Shields' sister?"

"No, madam, no kin to him—and yet more than kin—for he loved me, and I loved him more than any one else in the world, as I now love his poor young widow. This was the way of it, Mrs. Waugh: Michael's father and my mother had both been married before, and we were the children of the first marriages;

when Michael was fourteen years old, and I was seven, our parents were united, and we two grew up together. About two years ago, Michael's father died. My mother survived him only five months, and departed, leaving me in the charge of her step-son. We had no friends but each other. Our parents, since their union, had been isolated beings, for this reason—his father was a Jew—my mother a Christian—therefore the friends and relatives on either side were everlastingly offended by their marriage. Therefore we had no one but each other. The little property that was left was sold, and the proceeds enabled Michael to purchase a commission in the regiment about to sail for America, and also to place me at a good boarding school, where I remained until his return, and the catastrophe that followed it."

She was silent sometime after this, her bosom heaving with ill suppressed emotion. At last she resumed,

"Lady, all passed so suddenly, that I knew no word of his return, much less of his trial or execution, until I received a visit from the chaplain who had attended his last moments, and who brought me his farewell letter, and his last informal will, in which the poor fellow consigned me to the care of his wife, soon to be a widow, and enjoined me to leave school and seek her at once, and enclosed a check for the little balance he had in bank. I went immediately, found her insensible through grief, as I said—and, lady, I told you the rest."

Henrietta was weeping softly behind the handkerchief she held at her eyes. At last she repeated,

"You say he left you in his widow's charge?"

"Yes, madam."

"Left his widow in *your's*, rather, you good and faithful sister."

"It was the same thing, lady; we were to live together, and to support each other."

"But what was your thought, my dear girl, in bringing her here?"

"I told you, lady, that in her own native land, among her own dear kinsfolk, she might be comforted, and might resume her girlhood's thoughts and habits, and learn to forget the strange dark passages of her short married life, passed in a foreign country."

"But, my dear girl, did you not know, had you never heard that her uncle disowned her for marrying against his will?"

"Something of that I certainly heard from Edith, lady, when I first proposed to her to come home. But she was very weak, and her thoughts very rambling, poor thing—she could not stick to a point long, and I overruled and guided her—I could not believe but that her friends would take her poor widowed heart to their homes again. But if it should be otherwise, still—"

"Well?—still?"

"Why, I cannot regret having brought her to her native soil—for, if we find no friends in America, we have left none in England—a place besides full of the most harrowing recollections, from which this place is happily free. America also offers a wider field for labor than England does, and if her friends behave badly, why I will work for her, and—for her child, if it should live."

"Dear Marian, you must not think by what I said just now, that I am not a friend to Edith. I am indeed. I love her almost as if she were my own daughter. I incurred my husband's anger by remaining with her after her marriage until she sailed. I will not fail her now, be sure. Personally, I will do my utmost for her. I will also try to influence her uncle in her favor. And now, my dear, it is getting very late. and there is a long ride, and a dreadful road before me. The Commodore is already anxious for me, I know, and if I keep him waiting much longer, he will be in nc mood to be persuaded by me. So I must go. To-morrow, my dear, a better home shall be fonnd for you and Edith. *That* I promise upon my own responsibility. And now, my dear, excellent girl good-bye. I will see you again in the morning."

And Mrs. Waugh took leave.

"No," thundered Commodore Waugh, thrusting his head forward and bringing his stick down heavily upon the floor. "No, I say! I will not be bothered with her or her troubles. Don't talk to me! I care nothing about them! What should her trials be to me? The precious affair has turned out just as I expected it would! Only what I did *not* expect was that we should have her back upon our hands! I wonder at Edith! I thought she had more pride than to come back to *me* for comfort after leaving as she did!"

This was all the satisfaction Mrs. Waugh got from Old Nick, when she had related to him the sorrowful story of Edith's widowhood and return, and had appealed to his generosity in her behalf. Henrietta thought she had never seen her husband look hideous and revolting before—the round shoulders looked more humped—the bull head and neck more bullish—the wiry gray hair and beard more grizzly, and the flaming scar across his face more fiery than ever. She felt rather indignant, slow as she was to be moved to anger; but for Edith's sake she governed her feelings, and replied,

"Poor child—*she* did not come back to seek aid from any one. She lies like a dying child, without the power to form a thought or wish for herself, and she knows nothing whatever of my application to you."

"Then you'd better wait till she authorizes you to beg for her, Mrs. Waugh."

"I would," said Henrietta, suppressing her anger, "but if she is lying there, perfectly incapable of thought or action, and in the greatest extremity, some one must think and act for her."

"Let her husband's fine English relations do it, then."

"He had but one relative, a young girl; *she* has come over to attend upon Edith, as I told you before."

"With the hope of bettering herself, I suppose! Yes! I know all about such moves as that. I can see as far into a millstone as any one else! But they'll be disappointed, both of them! I'm not a man to be trifled with! Edith made her choice, and now, as it has not turned out quite so happily as she expected, she shall not turn back, and hoodwink and make a fool of me. *I'm* not to be wound around her fingers, or yours either, Old Hen! *I'll* not interfere! as she has baked she must brew. *I'll* not be bothered with her. Give me my pipe, Old Hen!

Henrietta arose and filled his pipe with unusual care, and lighted it well and put it in his hands, and then sat quietly by his side, until she thought the weed had had time to soothe his excited nerves; and then she began again, and sought to persuade him by every means in her power to relent towards her niece. She urged upon him the claims of humanity, of relationship, of Christian charity, of the world's opinion—vain, and worse than vain! And as for the fumes of tobacco, while they soothed him into quietness, they also seemed to sink him into sullenness and doggedness. And at last, Henrietta arose and left the room with a feeling of repulsion, that all Old Nick's ugliness had never been able to awaken before.

The destitute return of Edith was now pretty generally known through the household, thanks to the Commodore's loud replies, and brutal and violent manner. The members of the family were gathered into little knots, discussing the affair. Henrietta was very much troubled and perplexed. She had given her word that a home should be provided for Edith and Marian that very day—she had also promised to see them that morning. Now the morning was half over, and she had nothing hopeful to carry them.

It was little Jacquelina who helped her out of the dilemma. She chanced to find the fairy in her mother's room, standing between old Jenny's knees, getting her hair combed and curled.

"Aunty! Has Fair Edith come back?"

"Yes, my dear."

"And wont uncle invite her to come here and stay?"

"No, Lapwing."

"And she hasn't got any place to go?"

"No, she is houseless, poor thing."

"Well, I'll tell you what, Aunty, let her go and live at Old

Field Cottage—that's a nice place! A great deal nicer than this great big, horrid, old Lock-em-up, as Crazy Nell calls it. I'm sure I wish Mimmy would go back to it herself—we can see the outside of the world there, and the ships go up and down the bay. Fair Edith can go there."

"Why, I do not know but that's a good idea, Lapwing. I'll speak to your mother about it."

When, a few minutes after, Mrs. L'Oiseau entered the chamber, Mrs. Waugh broke the subject to her.

"Why," said Mary, "the cottage stands just as we left it. The furniture is mine, and Edith is quite welcome to the use of it, if her uncle will consent to let her reside there."

"Indeed I shall not ask him any questions about it," said Mrs. Waugh, "and since you are kind enough to let Edith have the use of the furniture, I shall load a cart with provisions and send it on in advance, and I shall then go to Benedict and convey Edith and her friend thither. And, Jenny, you may just pack up your clothes and go with me. You must remain with Edith, to wait upon her for some months to come yet—in the meantime, we will find some younger maid for Lapwing, and after that we will see what's to be done." And Henrietta went out to hasten her preparations.

Mary L'Oiseau was very much disturbed in consequence of this independent proceeding on the part of Mrs. Waugh, and expressed her dread lest she herself should draw the anger of the irascible Commodore down upon her head, for the share she had in it by lending her furniture. But Jacquelina was indignant that any one should be afraid to befriend Fair Edith. And Old Jenny expressed her perfect confidence that her mistress knew what she was doing, and that if she couldn't "'trol old marse in all things, she could 'trol him in most."

CHAPTER IX.

MARIAN.

"Not only good and kind,
But strong and elevated is her mind;
A spirit that with noble pride
Can look superior down
On fortune's smile or frown;
That can, without regret or pain,
To virtue's lowest duty sacrifice."—*Lord Lyttleton.*

AFTER despatching a wagon, well loaded with all necessary provisions, and many comforts and luxuries, for Old Field Cottage, Mrs. Waugh mounted her mule, and attended by Jenny on another, trotted off towards B——.

Good Henrietta was never thoroughly provoked before this. These usually calm, benignant souls, when they *are* moved, are very deeply troubled, indeed. She rode on, in something very like sullenness, feeling a strange, new repulsion toward her old invalid soldier, and a dislike, bordering upon contempt, for Mary L'Oiseau, and her small selfishness and cowardice.

Old Jenny, excessively social and loquacious, like all her race, made several attempts to open a conversation, persevering until her mistress, speaking for the first time, said,

"Don't bother me, Jenny."

And at this really unprecedented rebuff, the old maid sunk into a mortified silence, that continued the remainder of the ride through the forest.

When they reached the village and the little hotel and were shown into the small, shady parlor, Mrs. Waugh found Edith and Marian both present, and enjoying more comfort and privacy than might have been expected.

Edith reclined upon a lounge, with a thin handkerchief laid over her face.

And Marian sat, not too near, busily plying her needle—

how her fingers flew! yet with what quiet swiftness! That was the first thing Mrs. Waugh noticed as she entered the room. The young girl lifted her blooming face, and arose and came forward.

"Why how busy you are, my dear! How fast your rosy fingers *do* fly—perhaps that is what keeps them so fresh and roseate."

"Perhaps. But one of the things my mother succeeded in impressing upon my mind was, *the value of time as capital*—the only capital of the poor—the only inheritance which all have received alike from the Heavenly Father. Now I have a plenty of time, and no lack of work; and whatever my hand 'findeth to do,' I 'do it with my might!'" said Marian, smiling and nodding.

There was a frank, confident, cheerful strength in everything the young girl said, or did, or looked, that had the most encouraging and inspiring effect upon any one who saw or heard her. The little fog was charmed away from Henrietta's temper by the sunniness of Marian's presence.

"And Edith, my dear—?"

"She had a quiet night—took some little breakfast this morning, and has been lying very still—as you see her—all day."

Henrietta walked softly towards the sofa, and Edith drew the handkerchief from her face, and held out her poor, thin, transparent hand.

Mrs. Waugh took it, and caressed it a little, and bent over and softly kissed the sufferer, and sat down by her.

But Edith turned her head to the wall, and again covered her face with her handkerchief.

Mrs. Waugh then explained to Marian the arrangements that had been made for their accommodation at Old Field Cottage, apologizing, at the same time, for the small size and solitary situation of the house, and bitterly regretting that she had not in herself the power to offer a home at Luckenough.

"But now do you know that I think what has been provided is just the best possible provision in the world for Edith? Think of it! Under present circumstances, it would drive her crazy to live at Luckenough. The cottage is just what she needs—it offers her the solitude, the silence, and the perfect rest she craves. As to its poverty of accommodations, that too falls in with her mood. Edith, like many other mourners in their first bereavement, is possessed of a certain asceticism, and will enjoy no luxury, or even comfort, if she can help it, because the loved and the lost are not to share it with her. And I really do not think nature ever errs in these things—and I think if they are not opposed, they help to soothe the sharp pains of sorrow, and afterwards they gradually wear out."

"Where did you get your wisdom, my dear girl? and you so young—too young to have known much trouble, or to have had much experience."

"I have seen a great deal of other people's sorrows, and my little experience has been of a sort to make me observe and reflect. But let us talk of Edith—you need not be afraid that she shall suffer for any comfort upon account of the *distance* of the cottage from the village. I am a good walker, and can go ten or fifteen miles without much fatigue."

"And do you think that I shall allow anything of that sort? No, my dear—I shall send over the pony that used to be Edith's, and my own mule also, and oats and corn for both. Consider, my dear girl, that I have the *right* to provide for all the wants of your little household. What a well ordered little home it will be with you at the head of it, I am sure!—and I will do my best to *anticipate* all your wants, but if I happen to forget any, call upon me with the utmost freedom and frankness, as upon one who considers herself very deeply obliged to you for all your kindness and attention to her own niece."

Mrs. Waugh then arose to take leave, and they went to the parlor. Henrietta went to the sofa, and stooped and kissed Edith, merely whispering, in a low voice,

"Good-by, dear child; I will see you again in the morning."

Edith took her hand and pressed it in silence. And so they parted.

Mrs. Waugh went home.

The next morning at sunrise the family carriage stood at the door, and Henrietta had it well packed with everything that she could think of to add to the stores sent on the day before. And leaving word for the family to sit down to breakfast without her, she entered the carriage, again accompanied by Jenny, and drove to B——.

She got there in time to eat breakfast with Marian. She then insisted upon settling the whole bill at the hotel, and had all the baggage belonging to her two proteges packed into a cart, to follow in the wake of the carriage. Then, assisted by Marian, she dressed Edith, and placed her on the back seat of the carriage, and herself and Marian occupied the front seat. Jenny rode in the baggage cart.

And so they set forward towards Old Field Cottage. Their way lay over desert meadows, through remnants of the forest, over the old sterile fields, for seven miles to the sea-side cottage. It was ten o'clock when they reached it — the snow lay drifted all around the deserted cot—no road was near it, except that made by the provision wagon that had come the day before.

Edith was lifted out, and borne over the snow into the house. And the rest of her party followed. The room was just as we have seen it in the time of Mrs. L'Oiseau's residence there—with its low ceiling, its white-washed walls, sanded floor, pine table, flag-bottomed chairs, plain shelves, and corner cupboard. filled with blue delf ware; there was no lounge nor easy chair to receive the languid frame of the invalid. She had to be carried up stairs in the arms of Oliver, and laid upon her bed. When she had fallen into a sleep of exhaustion, Mrs. Waugh and Marian left her, and came down stairs and had a talk.

"Now, is there anything that you can think of that I can send her, my dear?" asked Henrietta.

"Yes, Mrs. Waugh, if you will be so good. You know that she cannot stay up in that loft every day, and all day long, as well as all night, and neither can she sit up down here—"

"I see—she needs a couch and a lounging chair for this room, and she shall have them. I will send them over to-morrow. Is there anything else?"

"No, madam."

The floor was crowded with the unladen contents of the two baggage wagons. And Marian was already busy among hampers, baskets, bundles, bags, casks, kegs, etc., arranging them in the cupboard or under the shelves.

Mrs. Waugh looked as if she wished to assist, but she was all unaccustomed to the use of her hands, and she could only call Oliver from watering the horses, and Jenny from gathering wood for the fire, to come in and assist in clearing the room and packing away the provisions.

When all this was done, and the fire was blazing cheerfully, and the kettle singing over it, and the little round table set out with some of the dainties she had furnished, Henrietta only waited to partake with Marian of the first meal eaten in the little home—"a tea dinner"—and then took leave, promising to visit her at least three times a week.

Henrietta reached Luckenough about sunset, little thinking of the furious storm that was to meet her there. As she drove up to the house and alighted from the carriage, one of her favorite housemaids came out with a frightened countenance, and drawing her aside, whispered,

"Please, mist'ess, go up to your room, and 'tend like you're got a berry bad head-ache."

"And why should I do that, you blockhead?"

"'Deed mistress, honey, ole marse done got de debbil in him, an' I wouldn' wonder what he'd do! 'Deed mist'ess, don't you go in dar, honey, please. You take 'vice. 'Deed he is got de debbil in him, honey—'deed he!—chuck up to his berry t'roat!"

"So much the more reason for my going to him. He has bottled up Satan against my return. He will let him off, and get rid of him as soon as I appear," thought Mrs. Waugh, as she passed into the house, and sought at once the presence of the angry man. She found him stamping up and down the hall—*alone*—he had frightened every living creature from his proximity. Mary L'Oiseau was cowering in her distant chamber, Jacquelina off into the forest, the servants all huddling together in the kitchen—the very dogs had sneaked off and were trembling in their kennels. And the Commodore strode up and down the hall, in the solitary majesty of his own demoniacal passion. In his best moods he was unfortunately very ugly, but now, in his diabolical anger, he was hideous—his huge form, and humped shoulders, and big head, and grizzly hair and beard, and fiery visage, adorned with that flaming scar—all, as it were, lighted up and glowing with fiendish rage! As soon as Henrietta appeared, the storm burst upon her devoted head.

I am not about to describe this scene—it is unfit for repetition here. It is sufficient to say that the Commodore had learned all that his wife had been doing for Edith—and now he poured out his wrath without measure; all that a coarse and unscrupulous old man, roused to fury, would say and do, was said and done—infamous charges, degrading epithets, and brutal and violent threats were hurled at, were showered upon good Henrietta. He called her an artful, designing woman, a deceiver, a household traitress—nay, he did not scruple many times to call her a thief—accusing her of purloining and appropriating property to which she had no right. And since he could not prosecute her, as he would any other malefactor, he should use his own authority, and punish the felony as it deserved. And so he strode and swore and gesticulated—stopping once in a while to shake his fists in Henrietta's face. It took about three hours for him to blow and storm himself down into a state of exhaustion.

And there sat Henrietta just as quiet as if she had been a wax figure, labeled, "a fat, comfortable, middle-aged woman reposing." So she had sat many times before, waiting for the tempest to subside—only *this* time had he but noticed the set of her mouth!

As it was, her very immobility at last added fuel to the fire of his rage. He suddenly stopped before her, and looking as if he was about to seize her, exclaimed,

"Why don't you speak then, madam? What have you to answer to all this? What can you say? Why don't you speak?"

"Because that which I have to say, should be heard by a man in his sober senses—which you are not," said Henrietta.

"Oh-h-h! Tah-h-h! Pish-ish-sh! Tush-ush-sh!" and every other expression that would throw contempt and scorn upon her words, and—"What is it then?"

"Anon—presently, Commodore! What I have to say, shall be said some half hour hence, when you have blown off the last of your anger. Will you please to begin again, and not stop till you get through?"

He *did* begin again! And his first fury, violent as it was, was a mere jest to this one—he became actually insane, maddened, frenzied. More than once Henrietta felt herself in imminent personal danger. It was terrific—but it was the sooner over. In less than half an hour his strength was thoroughly exhausted, and he let himself drop into his elbow-chair as feeble, as helpless, as much in need of a restorative as a fainting girl.

Henrietta contemplated him, as he sat there gasping and blowing, and blunderingly wiping his inflamed and streaming face. At last she spoke—

"What I had to say to you, Commodore, is this—listen, for believe me, it nearly concerns our future life."

"Go on, ma'am."

"You know well enough that I am not subject to tempers, not apt to speak from excitement, and not a woman of *vain words*."

"Too much preface, ma'am—too much preface by half."

"Very well; to proceed—I need not remind you what my regard for you has hitherto been. You know that I was betrothed to you at the age of fifteen—that you went away, and for twenty years was lost to your family—during the whole of that time, even when believing you to be dead, I remained faithful to your memory. At the end of that time—at the age of thirty-five, I found myself an old maid—but still an independent and happy old maid, with my fortune and time at my own disposal. Then you suddenly reappeared—unrecognizable, a weather-beaten, battle-scarred, disabled old man. And when you asked me to redeem the pledge I had made you twenty years before, I left my free and happy life, to become your nurse and housekeeper. You know how light and pleasant your amiable temper rendered my tasks. Enough! What I have been to you for the last fifteen years, it better becomes *you* to remember than *me* to recapitulate."

"You are turning off fine phrases, I think, madam!"

"I can turn off *coarser* ones, better adapted to your comprehension, Commodore Waugh."

"Damme, madam, what do you mean?"

"Only this," said Henrietta, "I mean that the scene of this afternoon, shall never be repeated with impunity—I mean if it should be repeated, *to leave you at once and for ever!* And I am not one to make vain threats."

Had the roof of the house fallen, had the sky dropped, had the surface of the earth collapsed—had any of these impossible things happened, the Commodore would not have been more completely astounded, more utterly overwhelmed! Henrietta leave *him; he* do without Henrietta? Was ever such a thing heard of in all life's impossibilities? He sat back perfectly immoveable, with his eyes staring forward at her until they seemed swelled to double their usual size, and threatened with the fate of the proud frog in the fable. He looked really pitiable. Henrietta proceeded without mercy.

"Heretofore I have submitted to all your whims and caprices, because they did not interfere with the discharge of my Christian and social duties; I have submitted improperly even then perhaps. I do not know that it was well so to have fostered your ill humors. But I had, as I still have, a very strong attachment to you, wherever in nature the strange affection could have come from. Now, however, to use a phrase not too 'fine' for your comprehension, you have got to the length of your cable with me; you can go no further at all, without cutting loose, breaking with me. What I have done for Edith, has been done at my own proper expense. I should scorn to remind you, were it not necessary, that Old Field Cottage was a part of my own dower—that Jenny, whom I have sent thither, was my own woman, and that the provisions I have sent, were purchased with my own funds. I have seldom applied to you, Commodore Waugh, for money to carry on the household expenses. It seems very mean and miserable that I should have to say these things to you, but it is absolutely needful to do so. And, moreover, I assure you, Commodore, that whether you like it or not, I am fully determined to provide for Edith and her little household; and remember, she is *your* niece, not mine. I intend to send her over the sofa and the easy-chair from my bedroom; and also my mule and the pony that she used to ride, and a cart-load of provender for them. And I shall also settle a pension on her. This I feel to be incumbent upon me, and shall do it at my own cost, and whether you like it or not. But, Commodore Waugh, I repeat it, if you *do* impede me in the performance of my duties, if you *do* harass, and wrong, and abuse me about them; I will, so heaven help me! separate myself from you at once and forever."

"You—you—you are heated! You—you are angry. You speak from excitement, Henrietta," stuttered the confounded and discomfited old soldier.

"No—I never get excited. I am *cooled* by what has passed—not heated. I am not moved to *anger*, Commodore, but to *action*. You know it. And you know I will keep my word. For I am not one to use vain threats, or having formed a resolution to repent of it, or having taken a step to retrace it. And so, Commodore Waugh, I leave you to think upon what I have said." And Henrietta arose and gathered her shawl around her shoulders, and went to her chamber to take off her bonnet and prepare for tea.

He sat there, immovable—his nerves and brain almost in a state of disorganization. "Think" of what she had said! He didn't know *how* to think—he had never thought in his life. Henrietta had always been his thinker—he had considered it a part of her duty. *She* had always *thought* for him, as she had nursed him, kept house for him, managed his farm, and balanced his accounts. And now, suddenly to call upon him to "think"—the most difficult of all the rest. He couldn't think, that was all about it! his brains were in a state of semi-decomposition, and had long ceased to perform any other function than that of a very dull galvanic battery, to propel the turgid blood in its downward ebb. So he sat there as helpless as an old lion without claws or teeth, feeling himself to be not a dangerous brute, though he could roar so terribly.

Henrietta's matrimonial admonition had been administered with all due privacy and discretion. Yet what is there that transpires in a house full of servants, especially of old family servants, who have an interest beyond mere curiosity in knowing everything that happens, that is not discovered and discussed? It was therefore well ascertained that the Commodore had been put down, that the household "Thunderer" had been silenced, and that his throne was a stool of repentance! And so the Commodore shared the bitter fate of "Darius great and good," and other fallen potentates, and was not only deserted but derided "at his utmost need." Mrs. L'Oiseau kept a discreet distance, knowing not how to steer her course to avoid the Scylla and Charybdis of the opposed parties. For though Henrietta was decidedly Lady Paramount, yet the Commodore alone possessed the power of bequeathing Luckenough. The very servants no longer flew to do his bidding—perhaps, because the dispirited old man had ceased to use the moving arguments of candle-sticks and pokers hurled at their heads The Commodore was a dethroned despot, and so everybody took sides against him.

Everybody but Jacquelina. It was impossible to calculate what would be that elf's course of action in any given case—

no conclusion could ever be drawn from her precedents or from a knowledge of her character—it was sure to deceive. One thing alone you could reckon upon—if you should expect her to pursue *one* course, you might be sure she would pursue the *other*. Upon this occasion any one in the world who knew Jacquelina and her little eccentric antecedents, might have reasonably supposed that she would have strongly opposed herself to her uncle. Not she. *Now* he was the weaker party, and a certain chivalric generosity always led Sans Souci to range herself upon the weaker side—very often that was the only test of right and wrong, and reversing the code of the world, Sans Souci was too apt to consider the weak and defeated *always* right, and the strong and victorious *always* wrong. So Jacquelina adhered to the Commodore in his mortification. She hovered about him, ran his errands, picked over his tobacco, filled and lighted his pipes, combed his hair and beard, and did everything she could think of to mitigate his case. And when nothing could move his melancholy, she would break out in something like the following strains of flattery and consolation:

"Never you mind, Uncle Nick! Spose you *were* naughty—you've got the same right to be naughty that other people have, I reckon, and so don't you feel cut up about it!"

"But I've *not* been naughty, Jacquelina," would the Commodore answer, almost meekly, "I only wanted justice—what was in the bond, you know!"

"Never mind, Nunky—never mind whether you have or not! You've got as much right to tell fibs about it as the murderers have to plead 'not guilty.'"

Oh! such a deep groan would be the comment upon this!

"Don't you take on so, now, Nunky. Don't groan—swear! Raise a row, and make a tremendous noise! Fire off your blunderbuss as fast as ever you can load it! And blow the whole house sky high!"

"Um—yes—I know! I should like to do that—but then Henrietta would leave me, Jacko—*she would, as sure as shooting?*"

"Oo-oo-oo!" cooed Sans Souci, pursing up her lips and raising her eyebrows, "is that it? Now I know!"

Soon after this, Jacquelina took it upon herself to arraign Henrietta.

"Now, aunty, just you tell me what you've been doing to uncle to make him mope about so, like a poor old turkey gobbler with the distemper?"

"Does he?" said Henrietta, absently.

"'Does he?' Why anybody can *see* he does! He's lost all his pleasant old ways—he never stamps up and down the hall roaring and bellowing and scaring the old beams and rafters into shaking agues—and he never throws the cats out of the window, nor kicks the dogs, nor flings his boot-jack at Bill's head, nor does anything he used to do! He's lost all his liveliness. He'll pine away and die, I know he will. Now what have you done to him?"

"Nothing improper, Lapwing."

"I don't know what *you* call improper, I am sure, aunty. *I* think it was *shocking* to treat him so. And he the head of the family!"

"Yes, but, my dear, suppose the 'Head' were so heated and inflamed as to be almost crazy, and in danger of getting quite frantic and doing the other members some fatal injury, wouldn't you clap a lump of ice to the 'Head' to cool it down and make it sensible? And now, my little Lapwing, if you can understand what I have said, so much the better, but whether you can or not, go now and wait upon your uncle, attend him as devotedly as you please, the better you serve him the more I shall be satisfied with you, only, my dear, don't presume to lecture your aunty, that is quite beyond your province, my little Lapwing."

"Well, that is right *downdacious?*" exclaimed Jacquelina; "aunty not only mutinies against the Commodore, but rebels against me!" And from that time Sans Souci made common cause with her uncle, and became the strongest and most uncompromising of allies.

Nevertheless, Henrietta's star was in the ascendant and reigned supreme. And to do the good creature justice, she did not abuse her power. She was more attentive than ever to the invalid soldier, and more careful than ever of his interests, but she *did* send over the sofa and easy-chair, and the mule and pony, etc., to Edith, and she *did* also settle an annuity upon her—being the half of her own income from her bank stock. As for the Commodore, when he recovered from his first panic of astonishment, the new necessity of moderating and controlling his furious passions proved very beneficial, not only to his moral but to his physical health; and he began to miss those sudden and violent attacks of illness that had so often brought him to the brink of the grave, and that had always been traced back to those frantic outbreaks of temper as their cause. Not that the old soldier was wholly reformed in that respect. By no means—a sudden and total suppression of his passions might have killed him; but he was so modified and improved that life at Luckenough grew much brighter and more comfortable.

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CHAPTER X.

HOUSEKEEPING AT OLD FIELD COTTAGE

"She hath no scorn of common things,
And though she seems of other birth,
Yet patiently she folds her wings
To tread the humble paths of earth.
She doeth little kindnesses,
Which most leave undone or despise,
For naught that sets one heart at ease,
Is low esteemed in her eyes."—*Lowell.*

It was a very interesting little family that settled down at the bay-side cottage—the tiny family of three in all.

There was Edith, with her low illness and her still sorrow—

her sorrow that had passed through all its violent, passionate, and frenzied stages, and had settled into this deep, calm despair, out of which, if you will be patient with her, it will also pass, for Providence is a wise, beneficent father, and Nature is a tender nursing mother, and they will bring her through. For the present blame her not that she lay upon her lounge always as still as death, with her slender white hands clasped above her head, and her handkerchief thrown over her eyes, as if to shut out the sight of all earthly objects—that she lay there with her fair face growing paler, and its blue shadows deeper, day by day.

There was Marian, beautiful and blooming Marian, with her young wisdom, her cheerful temper, and her ready sympathies—with her swift, light step, her busy, nimble fingers, and her prompt, despatchful industry. She cheerfully and confidently assumed the whole care and responsibility of the small household, and diligently occupied herself with its interests, and with manifold, affectionate preparations for the welcome of the little pilgrim, who, she trusted, would shortly bring hope and love back to the young widowed mother's heart, and sunshine and gladness to her humble home.

Lastly, there was Jenny, with her indefatigable hands, and, alas! her indefatigable tongue, too—a source of ever fresh entertainment to the English girl, to whom negro character, not as it is falsely presented in books or comic songs, but as it really exists in the south, full of indestructible self-esteem, disinterested affections, and audacious wit and humor, was entirely new, quaint, and piquant. Not the least amusing to Marian was the air of perfect kindness and sincerity with which Jenny approved and patronized *her*, telling her that—the English were "Jes as good as white people when they 'haved theirselves." And often the maiden's merry laugh would have rung out in silvery cadences, but that it was arrested on her budding lips by the thought of the suffering mourner on the sofa, to whom laughter, sunlight, and music, were as yet insupportable.

Marian busied herself with making the tiny cottage more comfortable and attractive. Remember it had but two rooms, one below and one above, the upper one being nothing but a chamber in the roof. And Marian thanked Heaven that it would take but very small means to furnish both as neatly and prettily as needful, thus naturally with her bright, cheerful temper, finding in the very meagreness of space a cause of congratulation. Marian set about preparing and adorning that upper room for Edith. It was a very fair sized chamber, coarsely lathed and plastered, and roughly floored, and had a good sized window at each end. The east one with a view of the bay, the west with one of the forest. The only furniture of the room was two bedsteads and beds, covered with blue checked counterpanes, and a tall, three-legged, old pine toilet-table, without cover or looking-glass. Marian and Edith occupied this only sleeping-room, while Jenny slept down stairs upon a mattrass that was taken up every morning.

But Marian, as I said, set about preparing and adorning this humble chamber for Edith. She went to B——, and by the sacrifice of a rich pearl brooch, an heir-loom and Marian's only ornament, she procured money to buy her materials and send them home in a hired cart. And the next day all her improvements were so quietly made, as not to attract the attention of Edith, lying still upon the sofa, with the handkerchief over her face.

And now see the room after Marian had metamorphosed it. The walls were whitewashed—the floor covered with delicate straw matting—the two beds with fine white counterpanes—the two windows were shaded with plain, deep-blue paper blinds, and draped with clear white muslin curtains; and her toilet-table covered with a top-piece and valance of white dimity, and adorned with a bright little looking-glass, and a pretty bottle of cologne, a tasteful pincushion, and other little matters. Opposite this toilet was a new wash-stand, with a pure white service Near Edith's bed was an invalid's chair, with a foot cushion. And there were two plain stands, and two other chairs. Lastly, in one corner, stood a pretty new cradle, al made up with its little bed and pillow and sheets—Marian's stolen, delightful work for a week past, and all covered by the finest white Marseilles quilt. It was near evening when the room was finished, and Marian stood with her cheeks glowing with exercise and satisfaction, contemplating her work—she thought the pearl brooch well bestowed, and never did the vainest beauty enjoy the display of her costliest jewels as Marian enjoyed this appropriation of her only one. Ah, if Marian could only have had in addition to the satisfaction of doing good, the pleasure of giving delight! But *that* she knew was impossible—she could not give Edith delight; nothing could do so. And her unspoken conclusion was endorsed by Jenny, who was tripping daintily over the clean straw matting, and settling here and there a fold of the white draperies.

"But Lor' Gimini! it aint de fuss bit o' use, far as *she's* 'cerned! It's ebery singly bit hev away on *she!* ten to one she'll not 'serve whedder dese yere nice 'Sales quilts aint dem der funnelly ole blue cottin counterpins! 'Clare to Marster in hebben, ef it aint right 'scouraging to see how she *do* go on layin' eberlastin' on dat sofa, like a dead corpse laid out!"

"We must have patience, and leave her to Nature a little longer. I have the greatest faith in Nature. 'Nature,' you know, 'is the handmaid of the Lord!'"

"Is she? I nebber hear tell o' dat before. Yes, but now I thinks ob it, *some* handmaids 'lects ob der duty, an' idles about. Maybe dat's de way Nater do! Leastways, ef Nater didn't get Miss Edy out o' dat der putty soon, I'd try somet'in' else—'deed me!"

Marian smiled, and they went below—Jenny to get tea, and Marian to sit down by Edith's couch and ply her needle, her rosy fingers flying like a bird.

At night, when Marian helped Edith up stairs—Jenny attending with a light—the invalid entered the chamber, casting her eyes around in a languid, absent manner, that left it in doubt whether or not she saw the change. Even the vexed exclamation of Jenny—"Dar den! what I tell you? She don't notice a singly thing!"—failed to attract her attention.

But Marian led her up to the little cradle, and asked,

"What do you think of this, dear Edith?"

The widow cast a weary, saddened glance upon the pretty novelty, and turning away her eyes, said, mournfully,

"It's no use dear; the child will die."

"Not a bit of it!" said Marian, cheerfully, "the child will live!"

No more was said then. Edith had spoken more than she had at any one time since her bereavement, and Marian hailed it as a promising symptom. And she thought that the time had now come when it was right to modify her "let-alone" system in regard to Edith—when the mourner might be gently drawn, without pain, from her self-absorption, and interested in the business of life and the hopes of the future. And Marian resolved to proceed accordingly.

The next day Edith lay as usual upon the lounge, with her arms laid up above her head, her slender white hands clasped, and the handkerchief thrown over her face.

And Marian sat near her, busy with her needlework, her rosy fingers flying with their usual celerity. She was a dear, pleasant girl, and a beautiful creature to look at as she sat there. Do you see her? in her plain, light-blue gingham dress, with her plump, rosy arms and neck, and her fresh and blooming cheeks, and full, ripe lips, and clear, kind, blue eyes, and golden bronze hair, rippling in bright wavelets off her white forehead, and gathered in a burnished knot behind, from which here and there a stray tress twists itself out in a tiny, glittering, spiral ringlet? Do you see her, as she bends lightly over her work, with her flying fingers—a work that never seemed toil, so pleasantly was it done, and so cheerful was her countenance, and so happy her voice. At length she took from her work-basket a tiny pair of infant's socks, that she had knit of white lamb's wool—now Marian thought if there was any article of a baby's dress pretty, suggestive, and even touching, it was the little socks—so holding them towards Edith, she said, "How do you like these, dear Edith? do you think they will do?"

The mourner did not hear; but upon Marian's repeating the question, she drew the handkerchief from her face, and turned her eyes upon her sister.

"How do you like these little socks, Edith? Please look at them. I think they are pretty—and I have other pairs—rose-colored, and straw-colored, and azure."

"Trifles! trifles! and useless—all!" said the sufferer, turning away her face. "Oh, Marian! make two shrouds instead. We shall die—I and my child."

"Not you. Not either of you. You will live, and learn to enjoy life," said Marian, cheerfully, as she resumed her work.

"But, Marian, I wish that we may die! I hope and pray to die, with all the poor, feeble power of hoping and praying that is left in this broken heart! I hope and pray to die. It is all that I have left to wish for!"

"You have much better things than that to hope for, dear Edith."

"Oh! Marian! do you know—*can* you know how hopeless, how joyless the future spreads before me? How loathsome is life—how welcome would be death!"

"But you will get over this, dearest, dearest sister, you will get over this. You are so young yet, dear Edith—only three or four years older than myself."

"So young, am I!" repeated the mourner, in a voice of despair—"so young am I! Ah! that is the very worst of all—the worst of all that is left, I mean—to think that I should have to carry this aching heart, this sore, sore heart through all the stages of life down to deep old age! Long ago, long ago I would have quieted this aching, throbbing heart, whose every pulse is a pang, in the first deep water that offered a resting place, but for the fear of God!"

"You forbore to die for the fear of God, go a step higher, dearest Edith," said Marian, her young face in a glow of faith and hope, "resolve to live for the *love* of God!"

"I cannot! oh, I cannot, Marian! I have no strength and no desire for strength to live. Prometheus chained to his rock with the vultures preying on his vitals. Such should I be, bound to life with this devouring grief eating out my heart! Oh! this gnawing, gnawing worm of grief! I cannot, cannot bear it through long years of life!"

"Nor will you be called to bear it long. Nature will heal the bruised heart, you will be drawn out among your brothers and sisters of this earth, you will lose the intensity of your own grief in seeing how many people there are in the world as sorely, as heavily beraved as yourself, yet living on in the cheerful performance of life's duties—you will find people to whom your life will be of the greatest service, and you will find some who will love you tenderly, as I do, Edith. And finally you will recover and forget your early sorrows, and will live a long and useful and happy life!"

"Forget! *I* forget! Oh! no, no, no, no! Oh! never, never! I can never forget him—*could* I ever forget Michael? Oh! Michael! Michael!" she cried, passionately bursting into a vehement fit of weeping, and burying her face in the pillow.

Marian's bosom heaved, and the tears swelled to her eyes, but she repressed her emotion, though her voice faltered when she spoke again.

"No, you will never forget *him*," she said, gently, "that is not what I mean, or wish. His pure life, his lovely self-devotion, and his early martyrdom, you can never cease to remember. But memory will cease to be the poignant anguish that it is—it will become a gentle melancholy, when you will speak of him without pain—then a tender reminiscence, when you will love to talk of him—and lastly, a sweet, solemn, holy thought, verging into a divine hope, which you will not care to speak of, but will ponder in your heart. And this sweet time will come, dear Edith, when the pang of the violent severance of *persons* is over, and you begin to feel the impression of his continued existence—his great spiritual life—and of his frequent presence and loving watchfulness over you. You will feel this—you will feel, in some respects, a closer union with him than you had before. You shake your head, dear Edith! You do not feel that now? I know you do not! *no* mourner does in the first bitter days of bereavement. Your intense longing for the bodily presence, your despair and your unbelief, keep out his pure spirit, that would visit and bless you—bless you in the divine, new intelligence he would inspire in your brain, and the heavenly charity he would breathe in your heart. So come the ministering spirits of the departed to their loved ones on earth—*not* manifesting themselves to sight or hearing—for disembodied spirits do not act with material organs upon material senses—but visiting us in spiritual impressions, in beautiful inspirations. So come the heavenly ones, dearest Edith!"

"You speak like one acquainted with grief—yet you cannot be, Marian. You! a young blooming, happy girl."

"You think so! yet I am an orphan, dear Edith. Before I saw you, I had lost every one in the world who loved me—there was not one left. I saw my father die—then my mother—and Michael's father, whom I dearly loved—and lastly, Michael. Do you think I am heartless, dear Edith? Do you think I did not share your grief for Michael? I did—not in the same intensity, for I know and realize what that which we call death really is. I have felt the spirits of my loved departed revisit me again; I have felt them in the deeper insight into spiritual things, in the increased joys of my soul's life—in its enlarged affections, elevated thoughts, and accession of faith and hope and love! I feel that Michael watches over us—not only from his heavenly home—but he draws near to us—he sees all that I am trying to do to reconcile you to life; and that helps me to persevere. Dearest Edith, it is only the bitterness of your sorrow that keeps you from realizing this consolation—but that will have an end, and then you will find even in this world, him whom you think you have lost!"

"Never! Never! for the bitterness of death will never have passed."

"It will, dear Edith! I have seen a great deal of trouble in this world—much of my own, and much more of other people's—yet I never new a sorrow either of my own or others, that time and nature and Providence did not cure! The world could not be carried on else. Life would stop, if every bereaved heart buried itself in the grave of its dead. And what indeed have Christians to *do* with the grave? has not Christ gained the victory over it once and forever? What is the grave, but the packing place for the worn-out habiliments of the soul; our loved ones are 'not there, but risen.' If we do not feel it so, then is our religion a cold Theology—a soulless body of a creed—and Christ, the Redeemer, has lived and died, and ASCENDED in vain!" said Marian, with her beautiful face transfigured by inspiration.

And all this time, while she spoke such high truths in her young wisdom, her slender fingers flew, plying her humble household needle.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE MAY BLOSSOM.

> "I would more spirits were like thine,
> That never casts a gloom before—
> Thou Hebe! who thy heart's rich wine
> So lavishly to all dost pour!"—*Lowell.*

"WILL you look at the baby now, dear Edith?"

It was a fair scene and hour—a pleasant, moonlight evening, early in May, and the humble attic chamber at Old Field Cottage seemed lovely as the interior of some fairy temple. The two white draperied beds stood at opposite corners, on each side of the east window, and with wide space between them. The window-curtains of white muslin were looped aside, giving a clear view of the open sea, and admitting the moon rays, that filled the room with a lovely, soft light.

Upon the right-hand bed, in a soft mist of white drapery, reposed Edith. Since the advent of her child, six hours before, she had lain in the healthful sleep of physical weariness. She was not only "as well," but *better* than "could be expected" And at last she awoke, and Marian raised the infant in her arms, and standing at the mother's bedside, said,

"Will you look at the baby now, dear Edith?"

"Oh! no, no—I cannot—I cannot!" said the invalid, turning away, and covering her face with her hands.

She was thinking, poor, fond mourner, of him who lay "sleeping in his bloody shroud."

"*Please* look at the poor baby, Edith, wont you? Please kiss her, and bless her, and then I will take her away."

"Oh! don't ask me! Oh! I cannot *now*—not just *now*—when I'm feeling—if he'd lived—how fond—how happy—" here the voice gave way, and the low sound of weeping was heard.

Marian crossed the room, and turned down her own cover, and laid the little one in her own bed.

But Jenny, who stood there stirring pap, was scandalized, was indignant.

"Humph! So Nater is de hand-maid o' de Lord, is she? Well! for my part, I does think she's a good-for-nothing, 'lectful huzzy, as ever I see! An' she 'serves to be sold to Georgy! *she* do! An' so I means to 'form my 'Vine Marster, next time I pray to Him!"

"N'importe," said Marian, smiling, and speaking to herself, "laissez faire."

"Lazy fair! Yes! she may be a lazy *fair;* but I tells you what—if she was a lazy *darky*, I know what 'ould come of her! 'Deed me!"

Marian laughed her low, musical laugh.

"Indeed, Jenny, if it were not for your company, I don't know that I could keep up my spirits all the time!"

"No, honey, likely not, indeed chile—'cause you see, my 'ciety was always 'sidered edifyin', an' 'sides which, I'se had a good deal of aperients in life, which has 'pared me to be a guide to de young. An' den I ain't proud, chile, 'deed me! pride's sinful, an' I don't 'dulge in it—as you knows yourself—for, dough you're an Englisher, I talks as free to you as if you wer' a white 'oman—if I *did* come o' de great fam'bly o' de Kalougus! Sure we're all *ekal* in de sight o' Marster!"

"But, Jenny," said Marian, smiling, "*I* came of an older and greater family than the Kalougas."

"Lor', honey! How could that be? And were you a lady born, sure enough?"

Marian nodded and smiled.

"A fam'bly greater than the Kalougus? But, Lor,' honey, that's unpossible. Der *couldn't* be no famb'ly no greater dan de Kalougus!"

"Yes, there can, and there is, and I belong to it!"

"An' what fam'bly is it, den, honey?"

"Adam's," said Marian, gravely and earnestly.

"Adams! You don't say so, chile! Well, dat is quality, sure 'nough! Why, de Presiden' ob de Benighted States, is John—John—Pearry? no! *Quincy* Adams! aint he? But, Lor'! I neber knowed how *he* had any English 'lations! An' so you'se a lady born, Miss Marian! Well, who'd a b'lieved it! Dough, to tell Marster's truffe, *I'd* a b'lieved it! 'Cause you nebber did look like any o' dese yer poor white people—'deed you! You always had long o' you, a sort of a—sort of a—gov'ning, 'manding sort of way—quiet, too—like you was used to it! Lor'! you must o' had a heap o' land and niggers!"

"No, I never had either."

"Lord, chile! dat's missfortunit! You come o' what's called 'cayed gentility?"

"Yes."

"I might o' knowed it!"

"The family I belong to—Adam's family—is very large, and though some of its members are very wealthy, and very noble, and even royal, yet some are also very poor and needy—I belong to the poor.

"Well, den, honey, all I sez is, how your rich 'lations ought to do something fur yer. An' ef I wer' you, soon as ebber Miss Edy 'covers of her 'finement, I'd go right up to Washington an' I'd set right down on top o' ole John Quincy Adams—dat's what *I'd* do—jes' as I telled Miss Mary 'bout *our* ole Marse! an' she tuk my 'vice, an' now see what her prospects is! all along o' takin' good 'vice. Now, you take my 'vice, Miss Marian, and see what'll come of it. Take my 'vice. I'se an ole 'oman as is had aperients!"

"But," said Marian, laughing, "Mr. Adams is a very, *very* distant relative, and I even doubt if he'd acknowledge the relationship.

"'Deed he! proud to do it! an' you so han'some!"

Marian smiled, and blushed—she could not deceive even in jest.

"I must explain all about this great old family to you to-morrow, Jenny," she said.

"Do, chile! I loves dearly to tell 'bout de quality."

And all this time while they talked, Marian's busy hands were going as fast as ever. She was preparing some cool, light farinaceous food for Edith. When it was ready, she took it to the bedside and persuaded her patient to swallow a few spoonsful. Then she handed the little waiter, with the bowl and spoon, to Jenny, saying,

"Now, Jenny, you may go down stairs and spread your mattrass and go to bed. I intend to sit up. But be sure to leave some fire in the fire-place, and a kettle of water, in case Edith should need something in the night. I also shall want to come down and make myself a cup of tea towards midnight, to keep me awake till morning."

"You 'tends for to *kill* yourself! You jes' *do!* Up all las night, and up to-night! I wont 'mit of it! 'deed me! Jes' you go 'trait 'long to bed. I gwine for to set up *myself*, 'deed me!"

But the young nurse was peremptory, and the old woman had to yield and go down stairs, grumbling.

Nothing could equal the tact and tenderness of this young watcher in the sick room.

It is true she sat by the east window, looking out upon the scene—upon the barren waste that lay between the cottage and the beach, and upon the sea, into which the crescent moon was just sinking, striking a slender line of diamond light across the waves.

But at every moan or restless motion of her patient, she was softly and silently at her bedside to render assistance. Her services were so quiet, yet so effectual, they seemed like the charmed ministry of some spirit—loving—silent—and invisible. There was nothing in her mute footfall, and nothing in the color or material of her soft, gray gown, to annoy sensitive sight or hearing, and the tones of her voice possessed the spell of soothing. The beautiful girl knew this, for she had studied it, and therefore she would not resign the duty that she felt no one else could fulfill as well as herself! And so she sat up night after night. And, in truth, several successive nights' watching did not seem to hurt her in the least degree. A short nap at noon, when both the mother and child were asleep, seemed sufficient to restore her. The finely organized creature had such a great fund of health and vital energy.

Upon the fourth day, Edith sat up in her easy-chair. Marian had wrapped her tenderly in the new, soft, white flannel dressing-gown that she made for her, and laid her gently back among the downy pillows of the chair. Then she softly combed out the silken tresses of her hair, turning the slight flossy black ringlets around her fingers, until they fell like raveled silk each side the pearly forehead, and played in wavering shadows over the thin, fair, spiritual face. Marian thought she never had seen so lovely a face. And she took a little hand-mirror from the toilet-table and held it before Edith; but as soon as Edith caught the beautiful reflection of her own face—to Marian's surprise—she suddenly threw up her hands and disheveled all her hair, and hiding her face in the pillows, burst into an uncontrolable fit of weeping. She was thinking of those dear, loved eyes, now closed in death—those fond, appreciating eyes that had so delighted to watch every change of her changeful face! The merest trifle sometimes! the fall of her eyelashes, the wavering shade upon her fair cheek of some straying ringlet—all had a poetic charm for *him!* Everything, everything—even her own beauty brought, back so vividly the image of him she had lost! Now that he could no longer rejoice in her beauty, she felt it to be painful—to be almost wrong to be beautiful for other people's pleasure! And she felt it would be a sort of satisfaction to look plain and homely. And she understood how it must have been that the old time, ugly, and repulsive "widow's cap" and "weeds" must have originated, not as a mere *form*, but in some sick, sick heart that felt *just as she did.*

Marian stood by Edith's side, patient and cheerful as usual, until the storm of grief had passed, and then she said,

"Let me make you tidy, dear Edith. You know your Aunt Henrietta will be here in a very few minutes now, and it would give her pain to see you this way."

"Well—well—comb my hair if you must, but comb the curls out straight, and turn them plainly off my forehead. I cannot *bear* to look as I used to."

Marian humored the invalid. And Edith, with her silky black hair parted over her fair brow, and half covered with the little delicate lace cap, looked lovelier than before. It was impossible to mar the beauty of that face. But Marian kept the glass at a safe distance, wisely resolving not to wound the sensitive young widow again with the sight of her own loveliness.

In the course of half an hour Mrs. Waugh arrived in her carriage, and very much inclined to scold Marian for not having sent her word of "the event" till the evening before.

"But you know," said Marian, "I had no one to send but Jenny, and it was impossible to spare her for the first three days. Besides there was no very imminent necessity. Edith was doing very well, and it is just as pleasant to you to come now and find her sitting up."

And then they entered Edith's chamber

The young mother sat as Marian had arranged her, looking the very picture of fragile, spiritual beauty. Upon her lap, no longer banished, lay the baby.

Henrietta was very tender-hearted, and this touching sight, of the widowed young mother and her new-born babe, impressed her to tears. She went up, very softly, however, and kissed Edith, and sat down and talked with her very quietly, and after a little while took the baby upon her own lap, and began to admire her.

"And what is to be her name, Edith?" inquired Mrs. Waugh.

Nobody had thought of that. Marian could not tell. Edith did not answer.

"She must be baptized, you know."

"I had not remembered it."

"You had better call her 'Marian;' I am sure there is no one who so well deserves the compliment."

"No—Marian is my good angel—but—Marian! what was *his* mother's name? strange! I never knew—he never chanced to tell me; but then we were so little time together; and his mother must have died before his recollection," said Edith, her voice almost drowned in unshed tears.

"*She did.* Her name was Miriam—she was a Jewess of the same tribe as his father."

"Then let my child be called Miriam," said Edith.

Mrs. Waugh had brought her carriage packed full of things—pots of preserves and sweetmeats; jars of jelly and jam; packages of loaf sugar, tea, coffee, spices, beef-tongues, and many other articles in the eating line; and also rolls of fine flannel, and whole pieces of linen, and of lawn, and of cambric, and sundry other items in the clothing way. And she now went down stairs, accompanied by Marian, to overlook the unpacking of the carriage, and the packing away of the presents.

Henrietta spent the whole day with Edith, and went away in the evening, well pleased with her visit, and with everything she had found at Old Field Cottage.

Edith recovered slowly but surely. Yet Marian kept the baby at night.

"It is better for you and for the child, that I should keep her," said the young nurse—for you are not strong, Edith! You need unbroken rest to restore you. And, besides, all physicians agree that it is better for a young infant to sleep with a strong, healthy person, like myself."

So the baby slept in Marian's bosom, not only then, but always.

And as Edith lay in her bed at night, between asleep and awake, she would often hear the young girl soothing the infant, cooing to her like a mother-dove to her young—and would wonder at the maternal tenderness that filled the maiden's heart for the baby. In after years, in the dark and tragic hours, Edith remembered these days and nights with a soul wrung with remorse, to think how little at the time she had appreciated the lovely self-devotion of the young girl.

When Edith was able to go down stairs, a very different scene to what the cottage grounds usually presented, met her view. Marian had industriously occupied herself with the adornment of the outside as well as the inside of the house. She had laid the little yard off in borders and beds, and fertilized them well with seaweed, and stable compost, and kitchen slops, and in short, with every refuse animal and vegetable matter, that would otherwise have littered the premises—and she had planted flowers and sowed seeds—and trained neglected vines, until the barren waste immediately around the house "bloomed and blossomed as a rose." And every shutterless window was deeply shaded with flowering annual creepers. The kitchen garden, a little beyond, was also in a forward state of progress. Everything about the little home was metamorphosed, as by an angel's hand.

But, alas, the young mistress of the house could take no pleasure in it. Her heart continued "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and "would not be comforted, because *he* was not."

But Marian was not disheartened.

"Edith," she said, reverently, "too much, perhaps, I have relied upon simple nature to heal your heart. Go, Edith, to the God and Father of nature—to *your* Father and Creator, who made your heart, and endowed it with those great affections so liable to suffer, who knows as none *else* can know—how the wound lies, and how to heal it. Go, Edith, to your Maker. Seek Him earnestly, seek Him constantly, in prayer, until He blesses you. Sweep aside, as so many flies, all doubts and fears, and all conflicting creeds and doctrines about Him! And go, a spirit, to the Father of Spirits—find the comfort there is in God, the Consoler! Oh! Edith, they tell us of God the Creator, God the Father; and awful, and beautiful, and joyous words they are indeed; 'Great tidings of great joy.' But, oh! Edith, none but the wretched, the forsaken, the bereaved, and the stricken in heart, who seek Him, know the infinite rest and comfort, 'the peace that passeth understanding,' the Divine joy found in GOD THE CONSOLER!"

"And is that the secret of *your* happiness, Marian?"

"That is the *cause* of my happiness, not the secret; God's glorious light is no secret but to the willfully blind!"

And thus this household angel of the Lord led the mourner from the darkness of her sorrows into the Glorious Light.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR FAY.

"A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, bewilder, and waylay."—*Wordsworth.*

"AUNTY, I am going to see Fair Edith's baby," said Jacquelina, following Mrs. Waugh up and down, as that good lady went through the old house, opening the creaking windows, and airing the musty rooms, that breezy May morning "Do you hear me, aunty?—I am going to see Fair Edith's baby."

"But I cannot give you leave to do so, Lapwing; your uncle's orders are peremptory upon that point."

"I didn't ask leave, aunty!—and as for uncle's orders, *you* didn't mind them when *you* went!"

"Hem—hem-m! That is a very different thing, Lapwing, of which you are not competent to judge. When the commands of any human being in authority clash with the commands of God, we must obey the Creator rather than the creature. Justice and humanity required that I should for once disregard your uncle's will, because it was not right. But remember this, Jacquelina, that if your uncle is not always exactly right, it is because no human being possibly can be perfect—and he is not, upon that account, the less entitled to your respect and obedience."

Jacquelina swallowed a rising yawn, and said,

"Well, I don't know whether it is 'justice and humanity,' but *something* requires me to go and see Fair Edith's baby."

"I can tell you its name, Lapwing—it is *caprice.*"

"Well, anyway, I think I, too, shall disregard uncle's wishes, because they are not right, and go, as *you* did, aunty. 'What's good for the gander is good for the goose.'"

"Yes, but, Lapwing, what's good for the goose may be fatal to the gosling, as disobedience often is to a child."

"Aunty, I tell you I'm going to see Fair Edith's baby, and the beautiful English girl, that everybody in the village says is as beautiful as all the angels! Mind if I don't! I don't care *what* Ole Marse say, as Jenny says."

"Jenny is getting insolent, I'm afraid; she's no example to you. And you must obey your uncle."

They had, by this time, reached the door of the room formerly occupied by Edith. Mrs. Waugh unlocked it, and entered, followed by Jacquelina. The good lady then hoisted all the windows, and threw open all the shutters, and a flood of light poured in, filling every nook and corner of the room. The place remained just as Edith had left it nearly twelve months before. Here, in addition to the heavy and permanent furniture appertaining to the bed-chamber, were articles that should have been considered Edith's own peculiar personal property. A small book-case, with glass doors, through which you could read the titles of a well-selected set of books; a small writing-desk furnished; a neat work-stand; a pretty work-box; a low sewing-chair and foot-cushion; two port-folios, filled with drawings and engravings, upon the table; small framed pictures on the walls; and statuettes of saints and angels on the mantel-piece.

Jacquelina had not entered this chamber since Edith's departure, and she looked around with curiosity, and then turning to Mrs. Waugh with surprise, said,

"Why, aunty, I thought uncle had sent all Fair Edith's things to her the day after she was married?"

"He sent her wardrobe and jewelry, but these other things he considered belonged to the *room*, and not to Edith."

"But, didn't he buy them and *give* them to her?"

"Yes, to ornament her room, not to take away," he says.

"Oh, that was so—" *mean*, she was going to say, but Jacquelina sometimes restrained herself. "Aunty, why don't you just have them packed up and sent right over to Old Field?"

"Because, Lapwing, I have no right to do so. Your uncle insists that they are not Edith's, and they were not purchased with my funds; therefore, Lapwing, I have no right to send *them*, as I had to send the other things."

"Why don't you ask uncle to let you send them?"

"I did, Lapwing, and he refused."

"I'll go ask him myself! I just will! I reckon he better not refuse me!"

And Jacquelina flew to find the Commodore. She might have been gone ten minutes, and Mrs. Waugh, having finished her errand in the room, was about to leave it, and close the door, when Jacquelina came flying back, her fair brow flushed, and her blue eyes stormy with indignation.

"Well, Lapwing, did you find your uncle and ask him?"

"Yes, I did."

"And what did he say?"

"He liked to bit my head off! An ugly old snapping turtle! But *I'll* pay him for it!"

Henrietta did not fail to reprove "the little vixen" for her irreverent threats, and then the aunt and niece separated for the time. Mrs. Waugh to make her old soldier presentable in company, and Jacquelina to seek her mother in her own apartment.

"Come in, my child; you must hurry now, and get dressed for church!"

"For church again this morning, Mimmy! Now you don't say that, after going to church all day yesterday, you're going all day to-day?"

"Yes, my dear, we are *all* going. Your uncle and aunt and myself are going in the carriage. And you are to ride the dapple gray. Professor Grimshaw will be here to attend you."

"I should like to know what you are all going to church *to-day* for!"

"It is a holiday of obligation my dear."

"A holiday of obligation! Why this is Monday! a *working day* of obligation! According to the commandment, there are six of them in the week, and the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, and the only holiday of obligation we read of!"

"Jacquelina! I wont stand that! I really wont! I have put up with your whimsicalities and perversities, but your heresies I will not permit! That would be fatal indulgence indeed!"

"Well, but Mimmy! *Do* tell me, why should the commandment of the Lord be set aside, and one of His six *working days* of obligation be made a holiday of obligation?"

"You have no business to ask questions, Jacquelina! But for your instruction I will inform you that this is the day of the Holy and blessed Saint Bonniface!"

"Well, I hope the bonny-faced saint is bonny in his temper, too, and wont take it amiss if, 'stead of going to church to do him honor, I stay at home to do the Lord some service."

"What on earth do you mean, you little irreverent. Oh! holy saints! what *will* ever become of this child! Go directly and call Maria, to get you ready for church."

"But *indeed* I can't go, Mimmy! 'Pon my word, I've got something very particular to do for the Lord, at home! I have indeed!"

"I do believe the child has taken leave of her senses," said Mrs. L'Oiseau, going to the door, and calling,

"Maria, take Miss Jacquelina and get her ready for church."

"Oh! I can't go! I can't! Indeed, indeed, indeed, I can't, Mimmy! I have got such an *awful ear-ache!*"

"Ear ache! what should have given *you* an ear-ache? This is not the weather for taking cold!"

"No, but uncle bawled at me till he made them ache. Oh! I know if I go to church I shall have to be taken out and brought home. Oh! oh! oh! how my ears *do* ache!"

What is the need to detail all the imp's perversity. She conquered, as she was generally permitted to do. And all the family departed without her.

All the house-servants, except Maria, and all the field laborers, except Stupe, had also gone to church. This last named individual was a sort of nondescript functionary about the premises—useful in nothing but implicit and literal obedience—sometimes a dangerous gift, as the Commodore had once proved, when in sending Stupe with a candle to the cellar one night to unpack some hampers of champagne, he had said,

"And now be sure to set the straw a-fire, you black rascal."

"When, half-an-hour after, the boy returned, the master asked, in some anxiety,

"Did you set anything on fire, you scoundrel?"

"Yes, sir, I sot de straw a-fire, as you telled me, but de cellar is so damp it wont burn good!"

You may fancy the terror, confusion and trouble, before the flames could be extinguished. This incurable thick-headedness had fastened upon him the *sobriquet* of Stupid or Stupe—his real name was Festus.

Jacquelina relied upon Stupe as the tool of the plan she had in view for the day. She waited until she thought the church party had got a mile or two away, and then she went out of the front door to look for him. She found him in the front yard trimming the grass.

"Hi, Festus! what are you doing there when you ought to be getting up the cart?"

"The cart, Miss?" repeated Stupe, staring with all his eyes.

"Certainly, the cart. Of course, the cart! What are you thinking of? I lay anything you had better let your old Marse come back and find you havn't got the cart up!"

"I wasn't 'tending nothing else, miss. I wasn't thinking 'bout getting no cart up!"

"Pshaw! you blockhead, I mean you better *not* let him come and find you havn't got it up."

"Oh! yes, miss! What is I got to do?"

"Catch a strong horse, and hitch him to the single horse cart, and bring it up to the door, now, directly! Make haste, now!"

"Yes, miss," and Stupe ran off to do her bidding, while Jacquelina entered the house to equip herself for a ride.

Maria was mending her own clothes in her mistress's room. Jacquelina called to her—

"Maria, you have just got to come down here, and help me to pack up these things. Uncle—I mean aunty, is going to send to Fair Edith—I mean Mrs. Shields."

"What things, Miss Lina?" asked the maid, leaning over the balustrades.

"*These* things in her old room, you stupid thing, you! Didn't you see aunty take me in the room this morning, and point them out to me?"

"Yes, miss, I saw you and mist'ess go in there."

"Well, then, come along, and help me to pack the things she wants to send to Old Fields."

The maid came down without the slightest demur or doubt, so much was she carried away by the assured manner of her little mistress.

By the time they had wrapped up all the statuettes and vases, and had taken down all the pictures, and packed up all the books in a large trunk, they heard the sound of the horse-cart drawing up before the door. Then Jacquelina went out, and called Stupe in to help to lift all the furniture out. The book-case and the writing-desk, the work-stand and the work-box, the sewing-chair and the foot-stool, the box of pictures, the box of statuettes, and the trunk of books, were all taken in turn, and carefully packed into the cart. It was a light load for a strong horse, and when all was put in, Jacquelina locked the room door, hung up the key, and told Stupe to help her up into the cart, as she was to go with the things. Here, for the first time, Maria made some objection.

"You musn't go, indeed, Miss Lina! You know you've cotched cold a'ready, and has got sich a berry bad ear-ache!"

"My ear-ache is well! And I'd like to see who'll stop me!" said Sans Souci, leaping, with Stupe's assistance, up into the cart.

Stupe walked by the side of the horse, cracked his whip, and the cart started, leaving poor Maria behind; in doubt and uneasiness, not at all upon account of the furniture and the books—but on account of Jacquelina's whim of accompanying them.

The cart proceeded on its way tolerably well, until they got into the bad road leading through the forest. Now, poor Stupe was a miserable driver, and there is no knowing how soon their necks might have been broken, had they not chanced to meet Cloudesley Mornington, on his way to the hall.

"Oh! Cloudy! Cloudy Morning! I am so glad to see you! I just want you to help me in a splendid piece of—of—"

"Mischief?"

"No!" said Sans Souci, indignantly. "You always think—*mischief*. No—a piece of good work, sir."

"You had better let me get up there in Stupe's place and drive—he'll smash the cart, and endanger your life, yet."

"That's just what I want you to do, Cloudy!"

"What? Smash the cart and throw you out?'

"No, you know it isn't! I want you to get up and drive. But—were you going to the hall?"

"Yes!"

"Well, then, you can just let Stupe take your horse, and lead him to the house, while you drive on to Old Fields."

"Is it *there* you're going?"

"Yes."

"Whew!"

"Now, what did you say 'whew' for? Never mind, get in, and I'll tell you all about it as we go along."

Cloudesley threw the bridle to the boy, and sprang upon the seat near Jacquelina, and drove on.

When Stupe was left far behind, Sans Souci explained to Cloudesley the business that she was upon. "Cloudy" looked very grave for awhile, and—

"Lina," he said, "this looks to me, very much like—not exactly *shop*-lifting, but *house*-lifting, if one might call it so!"

"It's no such thing, now, Cloudy! There! Aunty and everybody think Edith ought to have them, because they know uncle *did* give her the things, though now he wants to withhold them out of—curiousness! But never mind, Mr. Cloudy! If you don't want to go with me—if you are *afraid*, you may just get down, and go back, and I'll call Stupe—*he's* not afraid, poor slave boy as he is!"

"Pooh! It was not myself, but *you* I was thinking of! You! to dare your uncle's anger so!"

"Yes! I know he will be—*oh! he'll be awful!* But I don't care! not I! Because, you know he daren't send and take the pretty things away from Fair Edith again—*that* would be too shameful, and he knows it. So Fair Edith gets her things, I don't care how much he storms at me! But mind, Cloudesley! don't you let on how uncle *didn't* send them. Fair Edith will think that either he or aunty sent them, of course, and you just let her think so. And if she asks any questions leave the talking to me."

"Oh! of course you'd *take* the floor, whether it were *given* you or not."

By this time they had got out of the forest, and into the open country and good roads.

"Now make Samson travel! You know he'll have a good time to *rest* at Old Fields, and no load to bring back."

"Except a load of sin!" said Cloudesley, as he put whip to the powerful draught horse, and they moved rapidly on.

They soon came in sight of the sea-shore, and soon after came upon the little cottage, now half concealed in climbing and clustering vines, azure morning glories, rose-colored and purple; flowering peas, and scarlet running beans, climbed up and shaded all the windows, and overran the little lattice work over the door. In the yard before the cottage were blooming damask roses, and white lilies, golden head daffodils and jonquils, blue hyacinths, variegated tulips, and other sweet spring flowers.

In the door, canopied more royally than a queen by the over-arching vines, stood Marian, with her white dress and amber-hued tresses fluttering in the breeze.

"Oh! My! how pretty! Did you—did you *ever* see anything *near* so pretty?"

"Which do you mean, the cottage or the young lady?"

"Oh! all together!—both!—the picture. Oh! My! how sweet!" exclaimed Jacquelina, as they pulled up before the gate.

Marian, from her position, had recognized the blue cart, and Samson, the draught horse, from Luckenough, which had been at the cottage twice before to bring things sent by Mrs. Waugh to Edith. And now it was with more pleasure than surprise that she saw it once more stand well laden before the gate. She could not, however, recognize either of the young people, whom she had never seen before. Nevertheless, as soon as the cart stopped, she came down the walk smiling, and holding out her hand to the little girl that jumped off the cart and jerked open the gate, and rushed into the yard, exclaiming eagerly,

"Where's the baby?"

"Who are you, my dear?" inquired Marian, catching her hand to restrain her, yet smiling kindly on her all the time.

"Oh! *You* know! Jacquelina! Uncle's niece! There's the cart with some things for Edith. Aunty's gone to church. Oh! for goodness sake let me hurry in and see the baby."

"Stay, my dear, here comes the young gentleman—we must stop for him."

"Oh! that's only Cloudy Morning. Cloudy! Cloudy Morning! why don't you come along? What makes you so bashful? I declare if you ain't a-blushing like a hollyhock!"

And, in truth, Cloudesley *was* blushing, and *had* been holding back a little, awed for the first time in his life by the beauty of a young girl.

"She is not merely pretty—she is beautiful, as beautiful as—as—Oh, Heavens! what a charming, delightful face!" exclaimed Cloudesley to himself, as he shook off his strange timidity, and met the young lady who was advancing to welcome him.

Then Marian invited them into the house.

Edith, fully recovered, sat in her rocking-chair with the infant in her lap. Sans Souci was about to fly to her, and, perhaps, seize the child—the prize!—the wonder! But the fair and fragile appearance of the young mother subdued her impetuosity, and she came softly to Edith's side and knelt down, and looked at the baby some time, lightly kissing its forehead several times, and saying,

"Oh! Fair Edith, I do love your little baby so much! May Cloudy come and see it?"

"Oh, yes," said Edith.

"Oh! Cloudy, do come and see the wonderfullest little beauty you ever saw in your life!"

And Cloudesley came, and took and pressed the hand that Edith held out to him, and then to conceal the tears that came rushing to his eyes, he stooped and tenderly lifted the infant from her lap and carried it off to the window. Jacquelina following him with,

"Isn't it a beauty? Oh! Cloudy, isn't it a beauty?"

Cloudesley choked down his emotion, falteringly admired the baby, made believe to joke and pinch its cheek "to see if such a queer little thing *would* cry," and then as soon as he had gathered self-command, he went back and laid the child on the mother's lap. Happily also, old Jenny entered the room just then, and had to make her joyful greetings. And then Cloudesley, assisted by Jenny, went out to unload the cart. The things were brought in, and Marian, aided by Cloudesley, unpacked and arranged them. Meanwhile, Samson was unharnessed, watered, fed, and turned out to grass until the afternoon.

Then Jenny kindled the fire and put on the tea-kettle for a coffee dinner—to please poor Edith there was *always* a tea or coffee dinner at the cottage, as there is in many other houses where the family consists wholly of women and girls. There were, besides, nice light bread and fresh butter, a broiled chicken, cold beef tongue, and peach preserves with cream. Jacquelina and Cloudesley heartily enjoyed seeing the meal prepared under their own eyes on the neat village hearth, and Jacquelina assisted Marian to set out the little round table, and spread upon it the snowy cloth, and place on that the semi-transparent white service, that she declared "looked like refined moonlight." And as for Cloudesley, no alderman ever enjoyed his venison and turtle soup, eaten with a golden spoon, more than he did the coffee; truth to tell, Cloudy was remarkable for his devotion to the Arabian berry. And in the cottage everything was so snug, so cool, and so pleasant, that beautiful spring day, and the bright little fire on the hearth was not inharmonious with the open doors and the fluttering white muslin curtains and overhanging vines, through the partings of which could be seen on one side of the house a view of the sea, and on the other the flower yard and fields and forest. The meal was so impromptu, so easy, and the party that gathered around the table so youthful, so keenly alive to pleasure in every form, even Edith's pale cheek brightened into smiles.

Soon after dinner, Cloudy went to speak to Sans Souci, who sat by the baby's cradle.

"Lina, had I not better harness the horse to the cart, and get ready to start home?"

"No!"

"But it is getting late"

"Now, Cloudy Morning, don't you fret yourself into a fidget! I am going to stay till sundown, and go home by moonlight."

"But, my dear Lina, what *will* your uncle say to you?"

"Why, he'll storm at me, dreadfully, and that he'll do *any-how*? It's as well to be hanged for a sheep as a lamb! yes, and *better*, I think. I like to have the *worth* of a scolding, if I am to *get* the scolding. I know there'll be a tremendous storming up at home, but I intend to *earn it*, every bit of it; and then it will be such a satisfaction to know I deserved it, and that it was all right!"

As the imp said this, her malicious blue eyes, blazing with mischief and defiance, met those of Marian fixed upon her—fixed most intensely upon her—and most strange was the effect of that mutually encountering gaze upon the beautiful English girl. While yet unable to withdraw her fascinated eyes, her cheeks were overspread with a paleness, and sweeping her hand across her brow, as though to dispel some baleful vision, she sank into a chair. So sudden was her pallor and her sinking, that Edith and Cloudesley sprang to her side.

"You are sick—you are sick, dear Marian, what is it? will you lie down?" asked the former, while the latter brought a glass of water.

"Thank you, how very strange and foolish," said the young girl, taking the glass and drinking the water, and then again passing her hand back and forth across her brow, as if to clear away a cloud.

"What was it, dearest Marian, that made you ill!"

"I really do not know; I cannot account for it at all—a sudden panic seized me and I fell—it is passing away now—in fact it is past;" smiling and blushing at the unaccountable emotion; "now, indeed, it is quite gone," she added, still more brightly smiling in Edith's anxious face, and rising and lightly shaking off all the clouds from her sunny presence!

Sans Souci stood by the window in the attitude and with the expression of deep thought.

"Cloudy," she said, as the youth approached her; "look at me—have I got the *evil eye?*"

"Why, yes, to be sure you have! Didn't you know it before?"

"Now, Cloudy, you just be *serious*, *have* I got the evil eye?" asked the imp, in a low, fearful whisper.

"Why, *no*, you little goose; what makes you ask such a simple question?"

"Why, because, just now when I was laughing and thinking of how I would do uncle, I happened to look up in Marian's face, and the instant she caught my eyes she turned pale and sank down, *and I felt as if I had killed her.*"

"Pooh! your looking at her had nothing to do with it," said Cloudy; "and now I tell you, Lina, we had better set out home, or we'll not get there by nine o'clock!"

"And I don't care if we don't get there till twelve! 'In for a penny, in for a pound,' as Solomon Weismann says; and besides, I've got *ever* so many things to see first, that Marian promised to show me."

And so the Jay had! First of all, she must go up stairs with Marian and see the pretty new chamber furniture, and *all* the baby's pretty little clothes, that were laid away so nicely in an upper bureau drawer. And then she must see the wren's nest in the gourd out at the chamber window, and hear about its waking the family up with its singing early in the morning. And next, she had to visit the tortoiseshell cat and her two kittens; and, lastly, she had to go down to the shed and see Lily, the handsome white Durham heifer, fed. And during all this time, the elf was so interested in the sweet life around her, and so modified by its subduing influences, that when at last she came in, holding Marian's hand, she looked gentle and mild enough to have been Marian's little sister. Jenny had tea on the table, and Cloudesley had Samson harnessed to the cart. So, after tea, the young visitors took leave of Edith and Marian, and kissed the forehead of the sleeping baby, and departed.

Marian had put a beautiful posey in the hands of Jacquelina, telling her that the next time she went to Benedict, she would buy a little rocking chair, so that her little visitor should have a comfortable seat when she came again.

"And I can rock the baby?"

"Yes!" said Marian, kissing her with her smiling, rosy lips.

And then the cart drove off. Jenny walked by its side some distance to the first road gate, sending endless messages of respect and love and remembrance to every member of the household of Luckenough, from her master ("poor ole forsook benighted sinner," as she called him,) and her mistress, down to Stupe, the yard-sweeper.

Meantime Marian had returned to the house, smiling, roseate, cheery as usual; and making some pleasant remark about the departing visitors, she took her sewing and sat by the sea-view window to work. But Edith drew up to her side.

"Marian, I want you to tell me, dear, what it really was that agitated you so?"

Marian laughed. "I accept all experiences in physiological phenomena, Edith, even that, strange and unaccountable as it was? You will smile; but as I happened to meet that child's blue eyes, blazing with an insufferable light, while her whole form dilated as instinct with mischief and charged with destruction, I know not how it was, but some fell spirit, apart from the child, seemed yet to gaze at me and threaten me through her eyes; and a sudden panic seized me, and I sank with the strangest impression, *with the feeling of a strong man's arm catching me in a vice-like grip, and a sharp knife plunged into my chest*—" Marian shuddered in spite of herself. "It may be something—it may be a presentiment or a vision—or it may be nothing more than the effect of disordered nerves; perhaps we drink too much coffee; and yet I am perfectly well! But the affair is not worth so many words, dear Edith, and now that I have satisfied your curiosity, I will not give the subject another thought." And Marian resumed her needle-work, her fingers flying with accelerated speed to make up for lost time.

Marian had sometime previous got through all the little household sewing, and now she employed herself in working collars and caps, which she left at the village shops to be sold, and in the scarcity of such articles there, they commanded a ready sale. And now as Marian worked, she sang a favorite song.

◆

CHAPTER XIII.

SANS SOUCI'S FIRST GRIEF.

"Jamie's on the stormy sea."—*New Song.*

Meanwhile, Cloudesley and Jacquelina rode on through the woods.

"Oh! I *do* love you better than anybody in the world, Cloudy!" exclaimed the child, throwing her arms around the young man's neck with one of her impetuous hugs and kisses. "I *do* love you more than anybody in the world!"

"So do I you, Lina! Only I know you wont let me tell you so a few years from this, when you get to be a young lady."

"Wont I though, Cloudy! I should like to see myself not letting you. Cloudy?"

"Well, Humming-bird?"

"I do believe you'd do anything in the world for me."

"I believe so too, Lina."

"Even if it was naughty?"

"I fear so, Lina—at least, if I couldn't prevent your running yourself into trouble and danger, I should have to go shares with you."

"Well, now, Cloudy! this is what I want you to do, just as soon as ever we get home—you take your horse and go back to Benedict quietly, without coming into the house, or saying a word to anybody."

"And why should I do that?"

"Never mind! because I ask you!"

"Now, Lina! I know what you are up to! You want me to sneak back to the village, and leave you to bear all the brunt of the Commodore's wrath! Now, Lina, what would you think of me, or what should I think of myself to do such a mean, miserable act?"

"I know you couldn't do anything mean, Cloudy! But, oh! indeed, indeed I do wish you would go quietly back, as I say; for, see here, Cloudy! I don't mind uncle's storming at me one bit! Indeed, indeed don't I! *I enjoy it! that I do!* just as I should a magnificent thunder storm, such as scares everybody else to death! *But I can't bear to see him rage at you!* and to see you stand there with your lips compressed so bitterly, and your eyes flashing under their lids like a smothered fire! No! I can't bear that!"

"And do you think, Lina, that my heart rises and burns so upon my *own* account—no, Lina,—no, but upon yours!"

"And that is true, I know. For, whenever uncle blows you up, it is because of *me*. We get into all our troubles together, don't we, Cloudy? Or, at least, *I* draw *you* into all *my* troubles! Yes, indeed! I've just thought of it! I'm always getting you into scrapes! But I won't do so any more! indeed I won't, you dear, good Cloudy!"

"Never mind, Lina! It has been man's doom ever since Eve got Adam into that precious scrape of robbing the apple tree!" said Cloudesley, laughing good-humoredly, as he put whip to the horse.

They were just entering the precincts of Luckenough. It was after ten o'clock, and as they entered the lawn, the arrival of a cart at such an unprecedented hour, set all the dogs upon the premises to barking. And Cloudy had to use his lungs, and his whip, too, to conquer a peace, before they would recognize him.

When they drove up to the door, they found the front of the house all shut up and darkened.

Cloudy alighted, helped Jacquelina down from her seat, and then they both went up the steps to knock at the door, half expecting to be refused admittance. But just as Cloudy seized the knocker, the door was cautiously opened, and Mrs. Waugh drew him in, making a sign of silence. Then she beckoned Sans Souci, who entered, for the first time in her life, in a sort of awe. And lastly, she let her fellow watcher, old Oliver, out, to put the horse and cart away. Then she led the way into a back parlor, and struck a light, and turning to Jacquelina, said,

"Oh! my dear child! what *have* you done! Your uncle will *never* forgive you! He is *frightfully* angry!"

"You needn't tell me *that*, aunty! I knew it all along!"

"But, oh! my dear, you don't know the extent of his rage this time! Why, Lapwing, he drove every servant to bed before he went himself, and he swore that no one of them should admit you to-night! Think of it, my dear! The Lord knows what he will do to-morrow!"

"Aunty, just tell me! will he send and take Fair Edith's pretty things away again?"

"No, my dear, he wont do that, because that would make 'a town-talk all over the country,' as he calls it. But I do fear he will punish you very severely to-morrow!"

"Never mind! All right! He daren't kill me, nor break my bones, and for anything short of *that*—I've *earned* it, thanks be to goodness! And so he don't take Fair Edith's things away again, *I'm* satisfied! Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la! sang Sans Souci, making a whirl.

"Hush! you little wretch you! is *that* the way you meet it? You had better waken your uncle up, that is all! I was very much afraid the barking of the dogs would wake him, but it didn't!"

Then Mrs. Waugh asked after Edith, and the baby, and Marian. And when she had received satisfactory answers, she lighted a second candle, and put it in the hands of Cloudesley, saying, "There, young man, you know your room—go to it, while I take this child to her mother. Good night."

"Good night, Cloudy!" said Sans Souci, running, and holding up her face for a kiss.

"Good night, Fire-fly," said Cloudesley, lifting her up and kissing her, and putting her down again.

And Mrs. Waugh led her away.

I shall pass over the domestic tornado that swept through Luckenough the next morning. We have seen sufficient of Commodore Waugh's edifying method of family discipline to understand exactly how it was. The result was this: that Sans Souci was sentenced to a month's imprisonment in her chamber—which was first—when Old Nick cooled down a little, commuted to a week's, and next, when uncle began to be ennuyeé for the company of his little Jacko, to a day's confinement As for Cloudesley, who had come in for his full share of abuse, it was decided that he should be sent to sea immediately—nor was there any commutation of *this* sentence! For the affection growing up between the little girl of ten, and the youth of sixteen, was already beginning to give the Commodore uneasiness, as likely at some future time to interfere with his plans in favor of "Grim."

"Who knows *when* the nonsense called love germinates. I'm sure I can't remember when—*I*—no, when Henrietta took possession of *me*, soul, body, and estate!"

Commodore Waugh, by reason of his great services in the Revolution, as well as his late rank in the Navy, and his extensive political connexion, had ample influence to procure for his ward a midshipman's warrant, and to get him appointed to a good ship.

And the old sailor made a journey to Washington City for the purpose. And since he went upon a benevolent errand, it would be invidious to relate how much peace befell Luckenough during his absence! He came back at last, bearing the warrant that metamorphosed Cloudy into a naval officer.

Cloudesley was then dispatched to Baltimore to procure himself an outfit. And after an absence of two weeks, he returned to Luckenough, to wait orders. He soon received them to join the ship "Susquehanna" upon or before a stated day.

The intervening time was spent by Cloudesley at Luckenough, where Mrs. Waugh, Mrs. L'Oiseau, the maid Maria, and even Jacquelina, all devoted themselves to his service, until his linen was made up, and his wardrobe in perfect order for a three years' voyage. As for Sans Souci, to the surprise of everybody, she seemed perfectly delighted with the idea of Cloudesley's going to sea as a midshipman. She entered into the spirit of the thing with all her heart and soul! And after having assisted to get his wardrobe in order, she helped to pack his sea-chest. Cloudy, on his part, promising to bring her any number of parrots, monkeys, and other animal and vegetable and mineral curiosities from foreign parts.

"Poor Lapwing! she never parted with any one she loved, for any length of time, in all her life, and she doesn't know what it is when it comes!" said good Henrietta, noticing the child's high spirits.

Jacquelina excessively admired Cloudesley's new uniform, and nothing would do but he must put on the full parade dress, that she might admire *him* in it. So, to gratify *her*, and to please *himself*, too, maybe, as well as to "astonish the natives" of Luckenough generally, perhaps, Cloudy donned his handsomest uniform. Sans Souci was delighted, enraptured, enthusiastic.

"Cloudy?"

"Well, Lina?"

"I want you to save that suit of uniform for me!"

"*Now*, Lina!"

"Yes, I do! I want you, when you've worn it out, or outgrown it, to put it away and save it for *me*—I want to keep it, because it is the first uniform you ever wore! Now, will you do it? Will you promise me? Will you bring it back to me when you come? If you will, I will keep it, and show it to you when you are an old gray-haired post-captain!"

"Yes, Lina, I will save this uniform, and bring it back to you when I come," said Cloudesley, and he inwardly resolved to wear it but a few times, and then supply its place with a new suit, and put it away to keep untarnished for Jacquelina.

Sans Souci was half delirious with delight and admiration, seized both his hands, and holding them, danced up and down before him—her eyes dancing more than her feet. Suddenly her manner changed—her bright face was overshadowed—

"*You* are 'most a man now, Mr. Cloudy," she said.

"Well! what of that, Lina?"

"*I'm* only a little girl."

"And what of *that?*"

"You'll go and fall in love with a grown lady."

I shall do no such thing, Lina. What put such a notion in your head?"

"Doctor Solomon said so!"

"Solomon's a fool!"

"Yes, I know! but fools speak truth, they say."

"Not in this instance, Lina."

"No? And you wont fall in love with a grown lady?"

"No, surely not."

"Not if they're ever so pretty, and ever so rich, and want you to, ever so much?"

"No, no, no, and a thousand times no, Lina!"

"And you wont ever marry anybody but me—will you, Cloudy?"

"No, Lina, I pledge my word I will never marry anybody but you."

"God bless your dear, sweet, darling heart of you, I do say! I knew you wouldn't," she exclaimed with delight. "Oh, Cloudy! I do love you so much! I do love you better than the whole world put together."

When the day at last came for Cloudesley's departure, it was arranged that his baggage should be sent on before in a cart, and that the Commodore should take him in the carriage to B——, whence he was to sail to Baltimore. Jacquelina went through the parting like a Trojan! Indeed, she did not feel or realize it at all. Cloudy was full of spirits, and so was she On taking leave, she threw herself for the last time around Cloudy's neck, exclaiming, as usual,

"Oh! Cloudy! I *do* love you best of all in the whole world!"

And he returning the parting caress, answered, as always,

"And so do I you, Lina! But you wont say you love me when I come back!"

"Wont I, then! If I don't, you may call me a big story-teller!"

And so, without sentimentality or tears, the boy and girl separated. Cloudesley entered the carriage with the Commodore, and was driven off towards Benedict. And Jacquelina re-entered the lonesome house—very lonesome it seemed indeed with Cloudy and the pleasant bustle all gone, and the excitement of his going all over, and the reaction at hand! How empty Cloudy's room looked! He would not be in that room again for three years at least! Three years! what an interminable time! Say *never* at once! It had not struck the child in that manner before, but *now* it did with all its force! And now she felt stunned, amazed, with only the power left to wonder why she had not realized what this parting truly was before! There was nothing left of Cloudy's in the room, except an old pair of boots—but "Jacko" thought they looked so like Cloudy—at least they so reminded her of Cloudy, that she fell upon them in a vehement fit of grief, the first she had felt upon his account. What made it worse for poor Lina, was the fact her mother and her aunty had also gone to Benedict to make some purchases, and to see Cloudy off. And the house was left to herself, and Maria, her maid. So Jacquelina mourned, with no one to comfort her.

About the middle of the forenoon, however, there happened to arrive two visitors from C——, namely, Miss Nancy Skamp and her accomplished nephew, Mr. Solomon Weismann, the medical student. They had come in total ignorance of the absence of the family for that day. However, that made no difference at Luckenough. Maria informed the guests that her mistress would be home in the afternoon, and would be very glad to find them; also, that Miss Jacquelina was very much *down* about Master Cloudesley's going away, and that it would be kindness for them to stay and cheer her up. And therefore Miss Nancy Skamp and her nephew—neither of whom had the slightest idea of going back—charitably consented to remain. They were shown into the parlor, into which Jacquelina presently came to bid them welcome. Poor Sans Souci's eyes were red, and her face was swelled with crying. Miss Nancy Skamp saluted the child with a kiss, and after asking about the health of her mother, and her aunty, and the Commodore, &c., began to "cheer" the little hostess up with all the enlivening gossip she could think of—how Peter Semmes was going to have his leg taken off, because mortification had set in; and how Doctor Brightwell's little boy had lost his eyesight since he had the measles; and how widow Lloyd's son had been taken up for petty larceny, and his mother had lost her reason, and tried to drown herself, &c., &c., &c. But none of these things appeared to raise Jacquelina's spirits in the least degree.

And presently Solomon commenced. He had his own pet theory of curing grief, namely, upon the Homœopathic principle. So he began—

"So, Cloudy is gone, Miss Jacquelina?"

"Yes," said the child, trying to command herself, and to behave "like a lady."

"Poor Cloudy! how long is he going to be absent?"

"Three-ee years!" cried Sans Souci, beginning to falter and lose her self control.

"Oh! poo-oor Cloud-dy!" said Solomon, in the most pathetic of tones.

"Oh! Oh, dear! Oh, hoo-oo!" sobbed Sans Souci, still trying valiantly to suppress an outbreak of grief.

"Poor, dear Cloud-dy! Away upon the stormy sea for—*three—whole—years!* Oh! my! what a long time! it will hardly ever come to an end Poor Cloud-dy! Not to see

Cloudy for three whole years! What in the world *will* you do?"

"Oh! oh! don't! don't!" cried the tortured child, striving to suppress her sobs.

"And for him to live on beef junk, and mouldy crackers, and stale water, for—*three—whole—years!*"

"Oh! oh! don't! I shall smother! I shall die! Oh! hecca! hecca!" gasped Jacquelina, struggling for breath.

"And then to have to climb up to the mast-head in the dreadful storms, and be rocked about between the thundering and lightning clouds, and the boiling ocean waves, until maybe he is shaken off, and pitched into the depths of the sea, and drowned!"

"Oh! hecca! hecca! hoo-oo!" gasped Sans Souci, really suffocating.

"And then if he makes the least objection to that sort of treatment, to be court-martialed for mutiny, and hanged like a dog at the yard-arm!" said the merciless Solomon.

"Oh! hecca! hecca—hoo-oo—cahoo!" gasped and struggled Jacquelina, as she fell back in spasms.

"There, now! what have you done to the child?" said Miss Nancy Skamp, coming forward with her aromatic salts.

"Go away, Aunt Nancy! You're an old lady, and I'm a medical man! two classes that never *did* agree, and never will. I know my business! Let her alone, I tell you; don't raise her head up! There, now! she's got off a whole month's grieving in that spasm! I tell you I don't believe in these old chronic troubles; these enduring heart-aches. If anybody has a grief, let them bring it to a crisis at once: look at it on its very darkest side, and nurse it up till it rises to a head, and breaks in tears and sobs, and, if need be, spasms, and then it goes off!"

"Yes! and the patient goes off with it!" said Miss Nancy, indignantly.

"No, the patient *doesn't* go off with it! Not when the patient is young and strong, as this one; and of course, in all cases, a skillful practitioner modifies his treatment according to the age and constitution of the subject. I have my own theory of the treatment and cure of grief. Now, grief is a passion that acts powerfully upon the body, and is reacted upon in the same degree *by* the body. Thus grief tends to surcharge the heart and lungs with blood, making that sense of weight and heat that causes the frequent sigh. Now, what *is* a sigh but the drawing in of a deep draught of cold air to relieve the heat of the chest? Tears also relieve, by throwing off the superabundance of fluid pressing against the brain. Sobs and spasms and so on, are better still, for they tend to drive away the blood that might congest near the heart. In a word, sighs, tears, and sobs are the agents appointed by nature to relieve body and mind, by throwing off the heat and weight accumulated by grief, and dispelling the congestion by sending the blood in healthy circulation through the extremities. Hence the ineffable relief you women feel after having what you call a good cry! It is your *suppressed* grief that kills."

"Yes; I have heard silent sorrow is very apt to break the heart," said Miss Nancy, sentimentally.

"No, it doesn't *break the heart*, neither! that is another popular fallacy. Every physician knows the *heart* can't break! Why, it is about the toughest part of the human body."

"It has need to be, I am sure," said Miss Nancy, laconically.

"Well, and it is, and it *never* breaks; when grief kills, as it does sometimes, from suppression, there is usually a congestion of the portal circle, a failure of the gaglionic nerves, or, perhaps, a general atrophy, but never a *broken heart*—a post-mortem examination would probably find the heart the soundest of all the members. Grief never would kill, however, if it wa'n't for that humbug 'fortitude.' Now, fortitude is in direct opposition to the laws of nature. Fortitude has slain more than grief or pain. I would have any one in grief weep and wail; they will get over it the sooner! and I would have any one in great physical pain cry out lustily—it will do them good! But, I declare, here's that child come round already. It is too soon—she hasn't half unladen her bosom yet! Poor Cloudy. Poo-oor Cloud-dy!" he said, turning to Sans Souci, who was sitting up on the sofa, wiping her eyes. "Poor Cloudy!"

Sans Scuci looked at him resentfully.

"But *I* would not trouble myself about him, if I were you, either; for you may take my word for it, he wont trouble himself about you long!"

"I don't want him to, I'm sure! But I know he'll think of me!" said Jacko.

"Not he, indeed! What! Why, you're nothing but a little girl! and he is a gentleman and an officer, and he'll go to foreign countries, yes, and to foreign courts also; officers go everywhere, and he'll see many beautiful and accomplished ladies; not little chits of children, but grown ladies, who will admire him, and dote on him; ladies always dote on officers, especially handsome young officers like him, and he'll never think of you again!"

"He will! Cloudy will! I don't care if the queen falls in love with him, Cloudy wont forget me! We're engaged!"

"Think so? Ah, child! Cloudy is lost to you, indeed! You had better try to forget him, for, between one thing and another, you'll never see him the same again! for if he don't fall from the mast-head and get drowned; nor mutiny and get hanged; nor catch the yellow fever and die in a hospital, he'll be sure to fall in love with some fine lady, and never come back to see the little girl again!"

"Cloudy wont! Cloudy wont do any such thing, you monster, you! Oh! how I wish Cloudy were here to whip you!" and Sans Souci fell once more upon the sofa in a tempest of tears and sobs, caused this time as much by anger as sorrow.

"There!" said Solomon, "I reckon I have given her such a dose that she'll be sick of the subject of Cloudy, and glad enough to turn to something else and make herself happy!"

PART THIRD.

CHAPTER XIV.

WANDERING FANNY.

"All was confused and undefined
In her all-jarred and wandering mind,
A chaos of wild hopes and fears;
And now in laughter now in tears,
But madly still in each extreme,
She strove with that convulsive dream."—*Byron.*

It was a jocund morning in early summer—some five years after the events related in the last chapter.

The sun had risen in cloudless splendor above the bright waters of the Chesapeake, and all nature rejoiced in the beauty and glory of the day! There was gladness in the radiant morning sky! gladness in the fresh elastic air! gladness in the sparkle and flash of the fluid emerald waves! gladness in the dance of the dewy forest leaves! gladness in the smiles of the blooming flowers! and rapture in the jubilant carolling of a thousand birds that sent up their morning song of praise and thanksgiving.

The matin hymn of all nature was a Gloria-in-Excelsis.

Old Field Cottage, standing in the midst of this scene, was a perfect gem of rural beauty. The Old Fields themselves no longer deserved the name—the repose of years had restored them to fertility, and now they were blooming in pristine youth—far as the eye could reach between the cottage and the forest, and the cottage and the sea-beach, the fields were covered with a fine growth of sweet clover, whose verdure was most refreshing to the sight. The young trees planted by Marian, had grown up, forming a pleasant grove around the house. The sweet honeysuckle and fragrant white jasmine, and the rich, aromatic, climbing rose, set and trained by Marian, had run all over the walls and windows of the house, embowering it in verdure, bloom and perfume.

And upon this glorious summer morning Marian had come out into the flower yard to enjoy the fresh, invigorating air, and to see the sun as it were, rise up from the depths of the sea, touching with living fire every sparkling emerald wave! She was standing at the little wicket gate—there was a rustic arch spanning the gateway. She had trained morning-glories to climb over it, and now she stood beneath them rejoicing in the beauty and splendor of her best beloved flowers, rejoicing with a shade of pensiveness in her joy—for how perfect, yet how evanescent was the beauty of these morning-glories, these most lovely and fragile and ephemeral of all Flora's children. In perfect harmony with the freshness and splendor of the hour, was the beautiful girl, as she stood carelessly under the arch of morning-glories—a very Hebe! a very goddess of joyous life and health, and summer and sunshine. Into what a glorious fullness and perfection of beauty had the maiden ripened! Her finely developed form had attained a prouder height and richer fullness, and was suffused with the fresh, cool, roseate flush of pure blood and perfect health; her superb bosom and shoulders had a more charming contour—and her fine head arose with a queenlier grace. Her rosy cheeks were richer and brighter in their bloom; her clear blue eyes were darker in hue and deeper in expression, and her luxuriant golden bronze hair was brighter in the sunshine and darker in the shade than heretofore. She wore her hair as before—parted over the snowy forehead, rippling in tiny burnished wavelets down each side the blooming cheeks, and gathered into a shining mass behind. from which escaped here and there a fugitive tress, twisting itself into a glittering spiral ringlet.

While Marian stood enjoying for a few moments the morning hour, she was startled by the sound of rapid footsteps, and then by the sight of a young woman in wild attire, issuing from the grove at the right of the cottage, and flying like a hunted hare towards the house.

Marian impulsively opened the gate, and the creature fled in, frantically clapped to the gate, and stood leaning with her back against it, and panting with haste and terror.

She was a young and pretty woman—pretty, notwithstanding the wildness of her staring black eyes and the disorder of her long black hair that hung in tangled tresses to her waist. Her head and feet were bare, and her white gown was spotted with green stains of the grass, and torn by briars, as were also her bleeding feet and arms. Marian felt for her the deepest compassion; a mere glance had assured her that the poor, panting, pretty creature was insane. Marian took her hand and gently pressing it, said,

"You look very tired and faint—come in and rest yourself and take breakfast with us."

The stranger drew away her hand and looked at Marian from head to foot. But in the midst of her scrutiny, she suddenly sprang, glanced around, and trembling violently, grasped the gate for support. It was but the tramping of a colt through the clover that had startled her.

"Do not be frightened; there is nothing that can hurt you; you are safe here."

"And wont he come?"

"Who, poor girl?"

"The Destroyer!"

"No, poor one, no destroyer comes near us here; see how quiet and peacable everything is here!"

The wanderer slowly shook her head with a cunning, bitter smile, that looked stranger on her fair face than the madness itself had looked, and,

"So it was *there*," she said, "but the Destroyer was at hand, and the thunder of terror and destruction burst upon our quiet

—but I forgot—the fair spirit said I was not to think of that —such thoughts would invoke the fiend again," added the poor creature, smoothing her forehead with both hands, and then flinging them wide, as if to dispel and cast away some painful concentration there.

"Look at the flowers," said Marian, "are they not beautiful this morning?"

The stranger's face softened into a sweet, placid, pensive tenderness, and,

"Yes," she said, very slowly, "the flowers were *always* very kind to me, the dear, blessed flowers—they never change to me as others change—they never call me 'Crazy Fan,'—nor 'Poor Fan,'—they don't seem to think I am so—and they smile on me, and lean towards me, and love me like I was another flower."

"And so you are, poor wanderer, a broken, storm-beaten, faded flower—but a flower that may yet bloom in Paradise," thought Marian, as she reached her hand to gather a white lily, and hand it to the stanger.

But the hand of the poor stroller prevented her.

"Oh, do not break the lily! If you knew what a heavenly message the white lily brings," she said, "and oh! if you knew how sad it is to be broken off and never find your root of life again! *I* was broken off, but the broken flowers are happier than I, for they die!"

"Because you are immortal, and must live to recover, in another and better world, the treasures you have lost here," said Marian, gravely and sweetly.

"I know—I know!" murmured the maniac, softly, to herself, "but why am I shut out so long?"

"We cannot tell—we must all wait our time. But, come into the house, Fanny—you said your name was Fanny, did you not?"

"Yes," said the stranger, suddenly changing her manner, and breaking into song.

"They called me dark-eyed Fanny,
When friends and fortune smiled—
But Fortune proved uncanny,
And now I'm Sorrow's child!"

"Well, Sorrow is not an unkind mother, in the end, poor Fanny—be sure of that. And now come in and lie down on the sofa, and rest, while I make you a cup of coffee. Come! come into the house!"

But the same expression of cunning came again into the poor creature's face, as she said—

"In the house? No, no—no, no! Fanny has learned something! Fanny knows better than to go under roofs—they are traps to catch rabbits! 'Twas in the house the Destroyer found us, and we couldn't get out! No, no! a fair field and no favor and Fanny will outfly the fleetest of them! But not in a house! not in a house!"

"Well, then, I will bring an easy chair out here for you to rest in,—you can sit under the shade, and have a little stand by your side, to eat your breakfast. Come! come nearer to the house," said Marian, taking poor Fanny's hand, and leading her up the walk.

They were at the threshold.

"No! no! I can't go so near the house! I can't indeed! I am the Doomed, and Fate follows in my footsteeps!" said the poor creature, pulling back.

"What do you mean? Come, be gentle and good, and no harm can touch you here. Come, if you will not enter the house, sit down here, on this porch step, until I make you more comfortable."

"No! no! I must not! I should bring evil to the home! I *have* brought evil! I ought not to have entered your gate!" cried the maniac, wildly, wrenching her hand from Marian's clasp, and turning to depart.

"But, why?" said Marian, gently, going after her. "Why? we do not fear evil here!"

"Don't follow me!—don't! I am a conductor of evil! I should draw a thunderbolt of misfortune down upon your head! Avoid me!

"Not so! I would invoke the thunderbolt upon my own head, sooner than I would desert a sister woman to the fury of misfortune's storm!"

"You would?" said the wanderer, turning and facing her.

"The Lord knows I would! I hope any woman would."

The poor creature slowly and sadly shook her head. answering at random—

"No! no! It was not my fault! But if the plague had seized me—if I had been a leper—What was I going to say? Oh!" And the maniac clasped her temples, and her features grew sharp, and her eyes intense, as if in pursuit of an idea, that she seemed now to have found, now to have lost. At last, suddenly she raised her eyes, and gazed intently into Marian's face, and then she gave a start, and her features began to work strangely.

"Are you Marian?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes, that is my name."

"Oh, I oughtn't to have come here! I oughtn't to have come here!"

"Why? What is the matter? Come, be calm! Nothing can hurt you or us here!"

"Don't love! Marian, don't love! Be a nun, or drown yourself, but never love!" said the woman, seizing the young girl's hands, gazing on her beautiful face, and speaking with intense and painful earnestness.

"Why? Love is life. You had as well tell me not to live as not to love. Poor sister! I have not known you an hour, yet your sorrows so touch me, that my heart goes out towards you, and I want to bring you in to our home, and take care of you," said Marian, gently.

"You do?" asked the wanderer, incredulously.

"Heaven knows I do! I wish to nurse you back to health and calmness."

"Then I would not for the world bring so much evil to you! Yet it is a lovelier place to die in, with loving faces around.

"But it is a better place to *live* in! I do not let people die where I am, unless the Lord has especially called them. I wish to make you well! Come, drive away all these evil fancies and let me take you into the cottage," said Marian, taking her hand.

Yielding to the influence of the young girl, poor Fanny suffered herself to be led a few steps towards the cottage; then, with a piercing shriek, she suddenly snatched her hand away, crying—

"I should draw the lightning down upon your head! I am doomed! I must not enter!" And she turned and fled out of the gate.

Marian gazed after her in the deepest compassion, the tears filling her kind blue eyes.

"Weep not for me, beautiful and loving Marian, but for yourself—*yourself!*"

Marian hesitated. It were vain to follow and try to draw the wanderer into the house; yet she could not bear the thought of leaving her. In the meantime the sound of the shriek had brought Edith out. She came, leading little Miriam by the hand.

Edith was scarcely changed in these five years—a life without excitement or privation or toil—a life of moderation and regularity—of easy household duties, and quiet family affections, had restored and preserved her maiden beauty. And now her pretty hair had its own will, and fell in slight, flossy black ringlets down each side the pearly brow and cheeks; and nothing could have been more in keeping with the style of her beauty than the simple, close-fitting black gown, her habitual dress.

But lovely as the young mother was, you would scarcely have looked at her a second time while she held that child by her hand—so marvelous was the fascination of that little creature's countenance. It was a face to attract, to charm, to delight, to draw you in, and rivet your whole attention, until you became absorbed and lost in the study of its mysterious spell—a witching face, whose nameless charm it were impossible to tell.

I might describe the fine dark Jewish features, the glorious eyes, the brilliant complexion, and the fall of long, glossy, black ringlets that veiled the proud little head; but the spell lay not in them, any more than in the perfect symmtery of her form, or the harmonious grace of her motion, or the melodious intonations of her voice. She wore a black dress like her mother's—Edith would have it so.

And the color was in perfect harmony with the character of the little girl's countenance. For it might be hereditary temperament, or peculiar individuality, or her mother's deep distress just preceding and following her birth; either or all of these, but *something* gave to the child's splendid Syrian beauty a prevailing expression of impassioned melancholy. And there, perhaps, lay the mystery of its spell.

Edith, still leading the little girl, advanced to Marian's side, where the latter stood at the yard gate.

"I heard a scream, Marian, dear,—what was it?"

Marian pointed to the old elm tree outside the cottage fence, under the shade of which stood the poor stroller, pressing her side, and panting for breath.

"Edith, do you see that young woman? She it was."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Edith, turning a shade paler, and beginning, with trembling fingers, to unfasten the gate.

"Why, do you know her, Edith?"

"Yes! yes! My soul, it is Fanny Laurie! I thought she was in some asylum at the north!" said Edith, passing the gate, and going up to the wanderer. "Fanny! Fanny! Dearest Fanny!" she said, taking her thin hand, and looking in her crazed eyes, and lastly putting both arms around her neck and kissing her.

"Do you kiss me?" asked the poor creature, in amazement.

"Yes, dear Fanny! Don't you know me?"

"Yes, yes, you are—I know you—you are—let's see, now—"

"Edith Lance, you know—your old playmate!"

"Ah! yes, I know—you had another name."

"Edith Shields, since I was married, but I am widowed now, Fanny."

"Yes, I know—Fanny has heard them talk!"

She swept her hands across her brow several times, as if to clear her mental vision, and gazing upon Edith, said,

"Ah! old playmate! Did the palms lie? The ravaged home, the blood-stained hearth, and the burning roof for *me*—the fated nuptials, the murdered bridegroom, and the fatherless child for *you*. Did the palms lie, Edith? You were ever incredulous! Answer, did the palms lie?"

"The prediction was partly fulfilled, as it was very likely to be at the time our neighborhood was overrun by a ruthless foe. It happened so, poor Fanny! You did not know the future, any more than I did—no one on earth knows the mysteries of the future, 'not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.'"

This seemed to annoy the poor creature—soothsaying, by palmistry, had been her weakness in her brighter days, and now the strange propensity clung to her through the dark night of her sorrows, and received strength from her insanity.

"Come in, dear Fanny," said Edith, "come in and stay with us."

"No, no!" she almost shrieked again. "I should bring a curse upon your house! Oh! I could tell you if you would hear! I could warn you, if you would be warned! But you will not! you will not!" she continued, wringing her hands in great trouble.

"You shall predict *my* fate and Miriam's," said Marian, smiling, as she opened the gate, and came out leading the child. "And I know," she continued, holding out her palm, "that it will be such a fair fate, as to brighten up your spirits for sympathy with it."

"No! I will not look at your hand!" cried Fanny, turning away. Then, suddenly changing her mood, she snatched Marian's palm, and gazed upon it long and intently; gradually her features became disturbed—dark shadows seemed to sweep, as a funereal train, across her face—her bosom heaved—she dropped the maiden's hand.

"Why, Fanny, you have told me nothing!—What do you see in my future?" asked Marian.

The maniac looked up, and breaking, as she sometimes did, into improvisation, chanted, in the most mournful of tones, these words:

"Darkly, deadly, lowers the shadow,
Quickly, thickly, comes the crowd—
From death's bosom creeps the adder,
Trailing slime upon the shroud!"

Marian grew pale, so much, at the moment, was she infected with the words and manner of this sybil; but then, "Nonsense!" she thought, and, with a smile, roused herself to shake off the chill that was creeping upon her.

"Feel! the air! the air!" said Fanny, lifting her hand.

"Yes, it is going to rain," said Edith. "Come in, dear Fanny."

But Fanny did not hear—the fitful, uncertain creature had seized the hand of the child Miriam, and was gazing alternately upon the lines in the palm and upon her fervid, eloquent face.

"What is this? Oh! what is this?" she said, sweeping the black tresses back from her bending brow, and fastening her eyes upon Miriam's palm. "What can it mean? A deep cross from the Mount of Venus crosses the line of life, and forks into the line of death! a great sun in the plain of Mars,—a cloud in the vale of Mercury! and where the lines of life and death meet, a sanguine spot and a great star! I cannot read it! In a boy's hand, that would betoken a hero's career, and a glorious death in a victorious field; but in a *girl's!* What can it mean when found in a girl's? Stop!" And she peered into the hand for a few moments in deep silence, and then her face lighted up, her eyes burned intensely, and once more she broke forth in improvisation—

"Thou shalt be bless'd as maiden fair was never bless'd before
And the heart of thy belov'd shall be most gentle, kind and pure
But thy red hand shall be lifted at duty's stern behest,
And give to fell destruction the head thou lov'st the best

Feel! the air! the air!" she exclaimed, suddenly dropping the child's hand, and lifting her own towards the sky.

"Yes, I told you it was going to rain, but there will not be much, only a light shower from the cloud just over our heads."

"It is going to *weep!* Nature mourns for her darling child! Hark! I hear the step of him that cometh! Fly, fair one! fly! Stay not here to listen to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely!" cried the wild creature, as she dashed off towards the forest.

Marian and Edith looked after her, in the utmost compassion.

"Who *is* the poor, dear creature, Edith, and what has reduced her to this state?"

"She was an old playmate of my own, Marian. I never mentioned her to you—I never could bear to do so. She was one of the victims of the war. She was the child of Colonel Fairlie and the bride of Henry Laurie, one of the most accomplished and promising young men in the state. In one night their house was attacked, and Fanny saw her father and her husband massacred, and her home burned before her face! She—fell into the hands of the soldiers! She went mad from that night."

"Most horrible!" ejaculated Marian.

"She was sent to one of the best northern asylums, and the property she inherited was placed in the hands of a trustee—old Mr. Hughes, who died last week, you know; and now that he is dead and she is out, I don't know what will be done, I don't understand it at all."

"Has she no friends, no relatives? She must not be allowed to wander in this way," said the kind girl, with the tears swimming in her eyes.

"*I* shall always be her friend, Marian. She has no others that I know of now; and no relative, except her young cousin, Thurston Willcoxen, who has been abroad at a German University these five years past, and who, in event of Fanny's death, would inherit her property. We must get her here, if possible. I will go in and send Jenny after her. She will probably overtake her in the forest, and may be able to persuade her to come back. At least, I shall tell Jenny to keep her in sight, until she is in some place of safety."

"Do, dear Edith!"

"Are you not coming?" said Edith, as she led her little girl towards the house.

"In one moment, dear; I wish only to bind up this morning-glory, that poor Fanny chanced to pull down as she ran through."

Edith disappeared in the cottage.

Marian stood with both her rosy arms raised, in the act of binding up the vine, that with its wealth of splendid azure-hued, vase-shaped flowers, over-canopied her beautiful head like a triumphal arch. She stood there, as I said, like the radiant, blooming goddess of life and health, summer sunlight and blushing flowers.

The light tramp of horse feet fell upon her ear. She looked up, and with surprise lighting her dark-blue eyes, beheld a gentleman mounted on a fine black Arabian courser, that curvetted gracefully and capriciously before the cottage gate.

Smilingly the gentleman soothed and subdued the coquettish mood of his willful steed, and then dismounted, and bowing with matchless grace and much deference, addressed Marian.

The maiden was thinking that she had never seen a gentleman with a presence and a manner so graceful, courteous and princely in her life. He was a tall, finely proportioned, handsome man, with a superb head, an aquiline profile, and fair hair and fair complexion. The great charm, however, was in the broad, sunny forehead, in the smile of ineffable sweetness, in the low and singularly mellifluous voice, and the manner, gentle and graceful as any woman's.

"Pardon me, my name is Willcoxen, young lady. and I have the honor of addressing—?"

"Miss Mayfield," said Marian.

"Thank you," said the gentleman, with one involuntary gaze of enthusiastic admiration that called all the roses out in full bloom upon the maiden's cheeks; then governing himself, he bent his eyes to the ground, and said, with great deference—

"You will pardon the liberty I have taken in calling here, Miss Mayfield, when I tell you that I am in search of an unhappy young relative, who, I am informed, passed here not long since."

She left us not ten minutes ago, sir, much against our wishes. My sister has just sent a servant to the forest in search of her, to bring her back, if possible. Will you enter, and wait till she returns?"

With a beaming smile and graceful bend, and in the same sweet tones, he thanked her, and declined the invitation. Then he remounted his horse, and bowing deeply, rode off in the direction Fanny had taken.

And Marian remained at the gate—lost—looking after his retreating form. Once he turned his head, and seeing her still standing there, he bowed lowly, to the very pommel of his saddle, and then disappeared in the forest. And the roses upon the face of Marian were in their brightest bloom when she re-entered the cottage. The neat breakfast-table was standing in the middle of the floor, covered with its snow-white cloth, and adorned with its pure white service—the coffee-pot and the plate of rolls and the dish of stewed oysters were still sitting upon the hearth. And as Marian helped Edith to arrange these upon the table, the latter inquired,

"Who was that speaking to you at the gate, Marian?"

"Who but Mr. Willcoxen."

"What! not Thurston Willcoxen!"

"The very same!"

"You astonish me! *He* returned!"

"So it appears!"

"Why, when did he get back?"

"I am sure I do not know! He never volunteered to tell me, and I certainly was not at liberty to inquire."

"Well, I *am* amazed! What was the object of his visit here?"

"He came in search of Fanny. He introduced himself by name, and inquired after her, and as soon as he received the necessary directions, he set out in pursuit of her, and that is all," said Marian, as she sat down to the table, and began to arrange the cups to pour out the coffee, for of this little labor also the kind girl habitually relieved Edith.

After a little silence, Edith said,

"Thurston was a very handsome youth when he left the country—how does he look now, Marian?"

"Well," said the young girl, hesitating and smiling, "I do not know how princes *ought* to look, or how they *do* look—no better, really, I suppose, than humbler men—yet I have but one word to convey my impression of this gentleman's appearance and address—both were—*princely.* I have seen no one like him in this neighborhood—no one with so fine an expression, or so fascinating a manner—a manner, what shall I say—so full of suave and stately courtesy—of proud deference—in a word, Edith, I had the simplicity to gaze after the gentleman's retreating figure, thinking I had never seen any one ride so admirably, until he actually turned and bowed, at which I came in the house, a little flushed at having betrayed so much rusticity."

While they were yet talking, Jenny returned from her errand—alone.

"Did you see Mrs. Laurie?" asked Edith.

"Who de debbel *she*, honey? Oh! you 'fers to poor, dear, misfort'nate Miss Fanny! Yes, honey, I seen she," said Jenny, sitting down, and taking off her sun-bonnet, and making herself comfortable. "Yes, honey, I fell in 'long o' her, 'jes on de edge o' de wood. Dar she was—had hev herse'f right down on de jewey grass, unnerneaf o' de trees; an' I went to her, an' tried to 'suade her to git up, but I couldn' make no 'pression on her, to save my life! she didn' seem to hear me, nor likewise to see me! I jes' might as well stan' an' 'laver to a dead corpse laid out. An' I was jes' batin' 'long o' myse'f whedder I shouldn' pick her right up an' heave her right 'cross my shoulders an' tote her 'long home—when sudden—a patter-a-pat-pat! comes somet'n' into de woods, and up rid Marse Rooster Willfoxden!—an' I much 'spectin' to see de debbil as he! Well, he rid up, he did! like any hey-my-lord! An' he flings hisse'f offen his horse, he does, and he goes sof' like up to Miss Fanny, an' he draps down on one knee, and takes her han' in hissen, an' speaks 'spec'ful an' sof' like! Oh! you dunno *how* sof'! no mudder to her sick baby no soffer an' sweeter—an' calls her 'Fanny, my deares' cousin!' 'Deed he! *his deares' cousin*, an' he 'suades her till she lets him lif' her up, an' sit her on de horse, an' he takes de bridle in his han' an' leads de horse, and 'tends to her, and she goes 'long wid him quiet as any lamb!—Dar, now! what anybody t'ink o' dat! arter *me* spendin' *my* breaf talkin' an' talkin', an' argifyin' an' argifyin', an' not be able to do a singly t'ing long o' her?"

This was certainly a day of arrivals at Old Fields. Usually weeks would pass without any one passing to or from the cottage, except Marian, whose cheerful, kindly, social disposition, was the sole connecting link between the cottage and the neighborhood around it. But this day seemed to be an exception.

While yet the little party lingered at the breakfast-table, Edith looked up, and saw the tall, thin figure of a woman in a nankeen riding-shirt, and a nankeen corded sun-bonnet, in the act of dismounting from her great, raw-boned, white horse.

"If there isn't Miss Nancy Skamp!" exclaimed Edith, in no very hospitable tone—"and I wonder how she can leave the post-office."

"Oh! this is not mail day!" replied Marian, laughing, "notwithstanding which, we shall have news enough." And Marian who, for her part, was really glad to see the old lady, arose to meet and welcome her.

Miss Nancy was little changed; the same tall, thin, narrow-chested, stooping figure—the same long, fair, freckled, sharp set face—the same prim cap, and clean, scant, fadey gown, or one of the same sort—made up her personal individuality. Miss Nancy now had charge of the village post-office; and her early and accurate information respecting all neighborhood affairs, was obtained, it was whispered, by an official breach of trust; if so, however, no creature except Miss Nancy, her black boy, and her white cat, knew it. She was a great news carrier, it is true, yet she was not especially addicted to scandal. To her, news was news, whether good or bad, and so she took almost as much pleasure in exciting the wonder of her listeners by recounting the good action or good fortune of her neighbors as the reverse.

And so after having dropped her riding-skirt, and given that and her bonnet to Marian to carry up stairs, and seated herself in the chair that Edith offered her at the table, she said, sipping her coffee, and glancing between the white curtains and the green vines of the open window out upon the bay,

"You have the sweetest place, and the finest sea view here, my dear Mrs. Shields! but that is not what I was a-going to say. I was going to tell you that I hadn't hearn from you so long, that I thought I *must* take an airly ride this morning, and spend the day with you. And I thought you'd like to hear about your old partner at the dancing-school, young Mr. Thurston Willcoxen, a-coming back—la, yes! to be sure! we had almost all of us forgotten him, leastwise *I* had. And then, Miss Marian," she said, as our blooming girl returned to her place at the table, I just thought I would bring over that muslin for the collars and caps, you were so good as to say you'd make for me."

"Yes, I am glad you brought them, Miss Nancy," said Marian, in her cheerful tone, as she helped herself to another roll.

"I hope you are not busy now, my dear."

"Oh! I'm *always* busy, thank Heaven! but that makes no difference, Miss Nancy; I shall find time to finish your work this week and next."

"I am sure it is very good of you, Miss Marian, to sew for me for nothing; when—"

"Oh, pray, don't speak of it, Miss Nancy."

"But indeed, my dear, I must say I never saw anybody like you! if anybody's too old to sew, and too poor to put it out, it is 'Miss Marian' who will do it for kindness; and if anybody is sick, it is 'Miss Marian' who is sent for to nurse them; and if any poor negro, or ignorant white person, has friends off at a distance, they want to hear from, it is 'Miss Marian' who writes all their letters!"

"But, Miss Nancy, what of it? It is a *real happiness* to me! and I think it is right to *find* as well as to *make* all the happiness we can in this world."

"But, my dear, I don't know how you have the time, I don't indeed. Your day must be forty-eight hours long, and your week fourteen days!"

Marian laughed.

"We can always find time for a sacred duty, Miss Nancy, and I *do* think to nurse the sick, and sew for the old and blind, and to write for those who cannot write for themselves, are *sacred duties.*"

"Indeed I often try to remember what the neighborhood did before you came into it, and I wonder what we should all do if you were to be taken away!"

Marian laughed again.

"I am not likely to be taken away, Miss Nancy, I expect to grow gray at Old Field Cottage, and if I were to die, or depart, no doubt Heaven would provide you with a substitute."

"I don't know where one would be got then, I'm sure! For I know everybody thinks there's not your equal to be found. And as for me, Miss Marian, I should really think you were a *saint* if you didn't laugh so much."

At this Marian laughed more—laughed till the tears came into her eyes.

"Do eat your breakfast, Miss Nancy, and let me eat mine—for, if you *will* compliment me so much, I shall nave to compliment back again, and then my coffee will get coid."

Jenny, who stood at the fire, stewing fresh oysters, and listening to the talk, now looked askant over her shoulder, and grumbled, inaudibly,

"Why, in de inimy's name, don't de ole creeter let her wittels stop her mouth, for ebery precious word as comes out'n it is '*ceit.* Keepin' de table stanin' in de middle o' de floor till nigh 'pon nine o'clock, an' me wid my work to do!"

When they arose from breakfast, and the room was tidied up, and Edith, and Marian, and their guest, were seated at their work, with all the cottage windows open to admit the fresh and fragrant air, and the rural landscape on one side, and the sea view on the other, and while little Miriam sat at their feet dressing a nun doll, and old Jenny betook herself to the garden to gather vegetables for the day, Miss Nancy opened her budget, and gave them all the news of the month. But in that which concerned Thurston Willcoxen alone was Edith interested, and of him she learned the following facts: Of the five years which Mr. Willcoxen had been absent in the eastern hemisphere, three had been spent at the German University, where he graduated with the highest honors; eighteen months had been passed in travel through Europe, Asia, and Africa; and the last year had been spent in the best circles in the city of Paris. He had been back to his native place about three weeks. Since the death of Fanny Laurie's old guardian, the judge of the orphans' court had appointed him sole trustee of her property, and guardian of her person. As soon as he had received this power, he had gone to the asylum, where the poor creature was confined, and hearing her pronounced incurable, though harmless, he had set her at liberty, brought her home to his own house, and had hired a skillful, attentive nurse to wait upon her.

"And you never saw such kindness and compassion, Miss Marian, except in yourself. I do declare to you, that his manner to that poor unfortunate, is as delicate and reverential and devoted as if she were the most accomplished and enviable lady in the land, and more so, Miss Marian, more so!"

"I can well believe it! He looks like that!" said the beautiful girl, her face flushing and her eyes filling with generous sympathy. But Marian was rather averse to sentimentality, so dashing the sparkling drops from her blushing cheeks, she looked up and said, "Miss Nancy, we are going to have chickens for dinner. How do you like them cooked? It don't matter a bit to Edith and me."

"Stewed then, if you please, Miss Marian! or stop—no—I think baked in a pie!"

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CHAPTER XV.

THE FOREST FAIRY.

"Leaping spirits light as air!
Dancing heart untouched by care!
Sparkling eye and laughing brow!
And mirthful cheek of joyous glow!"

On the afternoon of the same day spent by Miss Nancy Skamp at Old Field Cottage, the family at Luckenough were assembled in that broad, central passage, their favorite resort in warm weather.

Five years had made very little alteration here, excepting in the case of Jacquelina, who had grown up to be the most enchanting sprite that ever bewitched the hearts, or turned the heads of men. She was petite, slight, agile, graceful; clustering curls of shining gold encircled a round, white forehead, laughing in light; springs under springs of fun and frolic sparkled up from the bright, blue eyes, whose flashing light flew bird-like everywhere, but rested nowhere. She seemed even less human and irresponsible than when a child—verily a being of the air, a fairy, without human thoughtfulness, or sympathy, or affections! *She only seemed so*—under all that fay-like levity there was a heart. Poor heart! little food or cultivation had it had in all its life.

For who had been Jacquelina's educators?

First, there was the Commodore, with his alternations of blustering wrath and foolish fondness, giving way to his anger, or indulging his love, without the slightest regard to the effect produced upon his young ward—too often abusing her for something really admirable in her nature—and full as frequently praising her for something proportionately reprehensible in her conduct.

Next, there was the dark, and solemn, and fanatical Dr. Grimshaw, her destined bridegroom, who really and truly loved the child to fatuity, and conscientiously did the very best he could for her mental and moral welfare, according to his light. Alas! "when the light that is in one is darkness, how great is that darkness!" Jacquelina rewarded his serious efforts with laughter, and flattered him with the pet names of Hobgoblin, Ghoul, Gnome, Ogre, &c. Yet she did not dislike her solemn suitor—she never had taken the matter so seriously as *that!* And he on his part bore the eccentricities of the elf with matchless patience, for he loved her, as I said, to fatuity—doted on her with a passion that increased with ripening years, and of late consumed him like a fever.

And then there was her mother, last named because, whatever she should have been, she really *was* the least important of Jacquelina's teachers. *Fear* was the key-note of Mrs. L'Oiseau's character—the key-stone in the arch of her religious faith—she feared everything—the opinion of the world, the unfaithfulness of friends, changes in the weather, reverses of fortune, pain, sickness, sorrow, want, labor! All the evils of life were exaggerated and made imminent by that one principle in her character, and worse than all, poor creature, her soul was filled, not with the love of the Father, but with the fear of the Angry God! the *Deus Iri* of her tremendous dread! Her worldly wisdom was of the same character, governed by the same motives, fear and self-interest. "Whatever you do, my dear, you must please your uncle and Doctor Grimshaw—never mind your aunty—she hasn't much in her own right to leave to anybody, and she is wasting it all on Edith. But your uncle, my dear; you must please your uncle, and win Dr. Grimshaw, too, for he never *will* leave you Luckenough, unless you are to be Dr. Grimshaw's wife, and if he don't, what should we do! Be homeless beggars for the rest of our lives!"

Now the time had not yet come for this proposed marriage to shock the merry maiden. She did not realize what was intended—the words were meaningless to her, worn out with constant use; she had heard them ever since she could remember, and she paid no attention to them; so to speak, "they went in at one ear and out at the other."

She was "ower young to marry yet."

So thought not the Commodore; for a year past, since his niece had attained the age of fourteen, he had been worrying himself and the elders of the family to have the marriage solemnized, "before the little devil shall have time to get some other notion into her erratic head," he said. All were opposed to him, holding over his head the only rod he dreaded, the opinion of the world.

"What would people say if you were to marry your niece of fourteen to a man of thirty-four?" they urged.

"But, I tell you, young men are beginning to pay attention to her *now*, and I can't take her to church that some jackanapes don't come capering around her, and the minx will get some whim in her head like Edith did, I know she will! Just see how Edith disappointed me! ungrateful huzzy! after my bringing her up and educating her, for her to do so! While, if she had married Grim' when I wanted her to do it, by this time I'd have had my grandchil—! I mean nieces and nephews climbing about my knees. But by—! I wont be frustrated *this* time!"

And so Jacquelina was kept more secluded than ever. Secluded from society, but not from nature. The forest became her haunt. And a chance traveler passing through it, and meeting her fay-like form, might well suppose he was deceived with the vision of a wood-nymph.

The effervescent spirits of the elf had to expend themselves in the same way. As a child she had ever been as remarkable for surprising feats of agility as for fun, frolic, mischief, and diablerie. And every one of these traits augmented with her growth. Feats of agility became a passion with her—her airy spirit seemed only to find its full freedom in rapid motion, in daring flights, 'in difficult achievements, and in hair-breadth 'scapes. Everything that she read of in that way, which could possibly be imitated, was attempted. She had her bows and arrows, and by original fitness, as well as by constant practice, she became an excellent markswoman—she had her well-trained horse, and her vaulting bars, and made nothing of flying over a high fence or a wide ditch. But her last whim was the most eccentric of all. She had her *lance*. And her favorite pastime was to have a small ring suspended from a cross beam, and while riding at full speed, with her light lance balanced in her hand, to catch this ring and bear it off upon the point of that lance. In feats of agility alone she excelled, not in those of strength—that airy, fragile form was well fitted for swiftness and sureness of motion, yet not for muscular force. Her uncle and Grim' indulged her in all these frolics—her uncle in great delight—Grim', under the protest, that they were unworthy of an immortal being with eternity to prepare for.

In these five past years, Cloudesley had been home *once*—namely, at the end of the stated three years. He had been received with unbounded joy by his child-friend; had brought her the out-grown suit of uniform; had spent several months at Luckenough, and renewed his old delightful intimacy with its little heiress presumptive, and at length had gone to sea again for another three years' voyage. And it must be confessed that Jacquelina had found the second parting more grievous than the first. And *this* time Cloudesley had fully shared her sorrow. He had been absent a year, when, upon this evening, we find the family assembled in the spacious passage.

I said that with the exception of Jacquelina, little change had passed over the members of the household. Mary L'Oiseau was almost precisely the same.

Mrs. Waugh had increased in flesh to such a degree as made it rather heavy work for her to go up and down stairs, a task only to be accomplished with much panting and blowing.

The Commodore was very much the same in aspect as when first presented to the reader. But he was suffering from the gout, that frequently confined him to his room. And this affliction, so far from disciplining his character or improving his temper, made him twice the tyrant that he was before. And Henrietta, really affected by his sufferings, not only never herself crossed his humor, but never permitted any one else to do so. She compelled them to submit with—"Remember your master's suffering leg, you thoughtless wretches you!" *to the house servants.* And to Jacquelina, "Oh! my love! just remember your poor uncle's poor, dear leg, and put up with his little ways!" His little ways! I will tell you what *they* were! —*one* of his little ways was—when confined to his room—to pound upon the floor, with his crutch, until three or four servants all started to run to him at once—notwithstanding the imminent danger of having the said crutch hurled at their heads as soon as they should appear at his door, or laid vigorously over their backs as soon as they should get within arm's length of him, for it was impossible to know exactly *who* was wanted, and if the right one did not come "woe betide him" when he *did.* Never had that leg, in the days that in company with its fellow limb, it had stamped up and down the hall, kicking the men and boys, and propelling the dogs and cats through the door, and making the old beams and sleepers tremble with sympathetic fear—been so much the dread of delinquents as now that it was swathed in bandages, and laid up on pillows. That leg was a sort of marshal's baton held up in terrorem over the whole family—a sceptre of iron, before which all must bend. Until finally Jacquelina got very tired of the bother, rebelled, and vowed that she, for one, was not going to be walked over by her uncle's leg any longer! there!

On this especial evening, the old sailor was so much better as to be able to come down into the hall and lie upon the settee, that before-mentioned green, wooden settee that stood against the wall in a line with the foot of the stairs. Henrietta sat upon one end of it, and here he lay at full length, with his head on the good woman's lap. They were discussing the one exciting topic of the neighborhood, the return of Thurston Willcoxen.

"If he had been guided by *me*," said the Commodore, "he never would have gone into foreign parts *first*. I think America, the United States and territories of North America, quite extensive enough for *any* young man's ambition!"

"Was it extensive enough for yours, uncle, when *you* went away for twenty years?"

"Hush, Magpie! You never open your lips that some sauce don't come out of them!"

"*Sauce-piquante*, uncle?"

"No, Minx! that goes *in* fast enough in company with rockfish!"

"Now, I leave it to any one who knows me if *I* am a *gourmand!* At least I have not *gout* enough to get the gout!"

"Where is my crutch? or the boot jack? Is there *nothing* to throw at her?"

"Can't you throw a *repartee*, uncle?"

"Silence, huzzy! Will *nobody* take that girl off my back?"

"Yes, dear uncle, any of the young gentlemen about Benedict will gladly do so!"

"Set fire to the young men about B——!"

"Well, then, Thurston Willcoxen will!"

"Devil fly away with Thurston Willcoxen! He and all the rest of them put together are not worth Grim's little finger!"

"Ah! but, uncle, Grim' is so *emphatically grim!*"

"He is a grave, self-governed man, as every instructor of youth *should* be, and I wish you to love and respect him."

"But I *hate* schoolmasters!"

"But he is not a *schoolmaster*, Hornet! he is a *professor*."

"Worse and worse! professors are the superlative degree of schoolmasters, and I perfectly loathe, abhor, and abominate professors!"

"Yes, but Wasp-tongue! he is a very fine fellow, besides being *my friend!*"

"Now, *that* is a most *reasonable reason* for liking him!"

"Yes, but if I make you marry him—"

"Make—*me*—marry—HIM!!"

"Yes, I say if I do, I'll give you Luckenough into the bargain!"

"*Would you?* Ha! ha! ha! Why, uncle! that would be heaping wrong upon wrong! Why, uncle! I don't like Luckenough any better than I do the professor! I would no more live *in it* than I would live *with him!* And I wouldn't take the haunted old place in fee-simple, much less with the incumbrance of that Ghoul!"

"Ghoul! Have you eyes in your head? Do you recognise a handsome man when you see one?"

"Is Grim' handsome, uncle? I really did not know it! However, people's tastes vary in the matter of beauty—now *my* taste differs totally from yours. I never could think your pet Ogre handsome. Thurston Willcoxen is *my* ideal of manly beauty!"

"There it is again! Girls are the most infernal calamity a man can be cursed with! Now I suppose you'll go making yourself a fool about him!"

"Make myself a *fool?* No indeed, uncle! *One* is enough of that class in any family!"

"What do you mean by *that*, Pepperpod?"

"Nothing, sir," said Jacquelina, with much meekness.

"Well! whatever you mean, Minx, I warn you not to fall in love with Thurston Willcoxen because he is handsome! For Grim, is just as handsome as he is, and handsomer, too, besides being my friend."

"I didn't know that we were to choose people by their good looks, and I am very sure, my dear aunty, here, never chose *her* husband for *his* beauty."

"Well, if she didn't, Saucebox, she chose him for his bravery, which is a better quality, I reckon!"

"*Bravery?* Now, uncle, you know I think the existence of that attribute in some people wants proof! I for one, always considered it traditionary and fabulous as far as *you* were concerned, or at least only existing and active while drums were beating and flags flying, and bullets whizzing, and blows falling in all directions, and the demon to pay generally! and the only alternative left was to fight or fall! *I* never saw much of the fire-eater about you, dear uncle! *Besides*, how came that bullet under your *shoulder blade*? You must have got that when you were running away!"

"I didn't, you vixen! I got it on board the Bon Hommo Richard in the thickest of the fight! My pistols were spent! My sword was broken! And I had closed with the foeman, hand to hand! foot to foot! breast to breast! in a death-grip! We were each trying to cast the other off the deck and overboard! And we should probably have gone overboard together and been drowned locked in each other's arms, like a pair of ardent and suicidal lovers, had not that chance bullet struck me, and made this wound, for which Old Hen will get a pension some of these days when it kills me!"

"A *penance*, uncle! Say a penance! I like Aunt Jenny's name for it best!"

"Bother! I don't want to bandy nonsense with you—I want to talk sensibly. And now listen! I do not wish my niece to let her thoughts wander after any of these hair-brained fops, so entirely beneath her notice! For I intend that she shall be the wife of a man of character and responsibility—of years, and weight and substance!"

"Lord! what a pity it is you can't marry me yourself, uncle! You are the heaviest and oldest man in the neighborhood! Say, wouldn't you like to marry me yourself, uncle?"

"I'd like to *brain* you!" ejaculated the old soldier, feeling about and finding nothing but his tobacco-box, he sent it flying at her. Jacquelina dodged, and ran away laughing.

"Come back here, Minx! I want to talk to you!" he said.

"Disarm him, aunty! take away his pipe, and his spectacles, and his snuff-box, and his pocket-book, (I don't think he will throw his *watch* at me!) and everything he can make a missile of!"

"Come back here, you little imp! Don't you see I've got nothing?"

Jacquelina came back, still laughing, and took her seat at her uncle's feet.

"I want to talk to you, you little aggravation! Have you no ambition? Shouldn't you like to be the wife of a great man? Now, Grim' is already beginning to distinguish himself. He will be a great man yet!"

"Yes! if he *grows stout* with years! He '*stands high*' in the community now!"

"You look as if you were making fun and I believe you *are!* I tell you, Professor Grimshaw is destined to make his mark in the world!"

"Of course, if he leaves his tracks in the mud."

"Henrietta!—I'll be shot if I *stand* this!"

"No! certainly not! don't try, uncle! it might hurt your *poor leg!*"

"Oh! Oh, Lord! What a visitation! What a judgment! What*ever* shall I do with this—this—this—. Don't you know, you minx, that Doctor Grimshaw will most probably be the next President of —— College? And have you no sense of the dignity that would attach to you as the wife of so distinguished a man?"

Jacquelina put her finger upon her chin, and cast her eyes down in demure reflection—then she soberly arose, walked up to the hat-rack, and standing before the little glass inserted there, deliberately contemplated herself for several minutes. Then as soberly she walked back and resumed her seat, saying,

"It wont do, uncle! I don't look like it! no, not one bit!"

"Don't be too humble, Miss L'Oiseau! For whether you really deserve it or not, you will have that 'greatness thrust' upon you!"

"Then, indeed, I shall cast it off again."

"Indeed, you shall not!"

"Try me! *Dare* to try me!"

Up to this time the bantering conflict had been carried on good-humoredly, notwithstanding the sauciness of Jacquelina's retorts, but now there was danger of the antagonists getting out of temper, and the sham quarrel becoming a real one, when Mrs. Waugh interfered by changing the subject.

They lingered long in the hall that evening, longer than usual. Was it with any prophetic feeling that this would be the very last evening they would ever sit in that old passage way again?

That very night the old mansion, that had withstood the storms of more than two hundred winters, was burned to the ground!

The fire broke out in the kitchen. Upon that fatal evening it had been left to Stupid to cover up the brands on the kitchen hearth. No one could surmise how he contrived to draw on the calamity. It is true that Maria, who was waiting on her master at his bedside, had mockingly told "Stupe" to be sure and *leave a coal sticking to the broom* when he swept the ashes up. But could Stupe have been such a fool as to take her at her word? Maria was not certain, and upon the whole, she thought it best not to investigate the matter too closely. For indeed, Stupe had become most lamentably stupid since his master's accession of illness and ill-temper had kept him in a state of perpetual panic, in fact since the reign of the leg had commenced.

Be that as it may, upon the evening of the fire, Jacquelina had gone to her room—she had an apartment to herself now—and feeling for the first time in her life, some little uneasiness about her uncle's "whim" of wedding her to Grim', she had walked about the floor for sometime in much restlessness of mind and body; then she went to a wardrobe, and took out Cloudy's treasured first uniform, and held it up before her. How small it looked now; why it was scarcely too large for herself! And how much Cloudy had outgrown it! It had fitted him nicely at sixteen, now he was twenty-one, and in two years more he would be home again! Smiling to herself, and tossing her charming head, as at some invisible foe, she said,

"Yes, indeed! I should *so* like to see them do it!"

She pressed the cloth up to her face, and put it away, and, still smiling to herself, retired to rest, to dream of her dear playmate.

She dreamed of being in his ship on the open sea, the scene idealized to supernal beauty and sublimity, as all such scenes are in dreams; and then she thought the ship took fire, and saw, and heard, and felt the great panic and horror that ensued.

She woke in a terrible fright. A part of her dream was true! Her chamber was filled with smoke, and the house was chaotic with noise and confusion, and resounded with cries of "Fire! Fire!" everywhere. What happened next passed with the swiftness of lightning. She jumped out of bed, seized a woollen shawl, and wrapped it around her head, and even in that imminent danger not forgetting her most cherished treasure, Cloudy's suit of uniform, snatched it from the wardrobe and fled out of the room. Her swift and dipping motion that had gained her the name of "Lapwing," now served her well—shooting her bright head forward and downward, she fled through all the passages, and down all the stairs, and out by the great hall, that was all in flames, until she reached the lawn, where the panic-stricken and nearly idiotic household were assembled, weeping, moaning and wringing their hands, while they gazed upon the work of destruction before them in impotent despair!

Jacquelina looked all around upon the group, each figure of which glared redly in the light of the flames. All were present —all but the Commodore! Where could the Commodore be?

Jacquelina ran through the crowd looking for him in all directions. He was nowhere visible, though the whole area was lighted up, even to the edge of the forest, every tree and branch and twig and leaf of which was distinctly revealed in the strong red glare.

"Where is uncle? Oh! where is uncle?" she exclaimed, running wildly about, and finally going up to Mrs. Waugh, who, in her nightclothes, stood looking the statue of consternation!

Jacquelina shook her fat arm.

"Aunty! aunty! Where is uncle? Are you bewitched? Where is uncle?"

"Where? Here, somewhere. I saw him run out before me."

"No, you didn't! you mistook somebody else for him. Oh, my Lord! he is in the burning house!—he is in the house!"

"Oh, he is in the house! he is in the house!" echoed Henrietta, now roused from her panic, and wringing her hands in the most acute distress. "Oh! will nobody save him! will nobody save him!"

It was too late! Commodore Waugh was in the burning mansion, in his bedchamber, near the top of the house, fast asleep!

"Good heaven! will no one *attempt* to save him?" screamed Henrietta, running wildly from one to the other.

They all gazed on each other, and then in consternation upon the burning building, every window of which was belching flame, while the sound of some falling rafter, or the explosion of some combustible substance was continually heard! To venture into that blazing house, with its sinking roof and falling rafters, seemed certain death.

"Oh! my God! my God! will none even *try* to save him?" cried Henrietta, wringing her hands in extreme anguish.

Suddenly—

"Pray for me, aunty!" exclaimed Jacquelina, and she darted like a bird towards the house, into the passage, and seemed lost in the smoke and flame!

Wrapping the woollen shawl closely about her, and keeping near the floor, she glided swiftly up the stairs, flight after flight, and through the suffocating passages until she reached her uncle's door; it was open, and his room was clearer of smoke than any other, from the wind blowing through the open window.

There he lay in a deep sleep! She sprang to the bedside, seized and shook the arm of the sleeper.

"Uncle! uncle! wake, for God's sake, wake! the house is on fire!"

"Hum-m-m-e!" muttered the old man, giving a great heave and plunge, and turning over into a heavier sleep than before.

"Uncle! uncle! You will be burned to death, if you don't wake up!" cried Jacquelina, shaking him violently.

"Humph! Yes, Jacquelina! um—um—um—Grim! um—um—Luckenough! muttered the dreamer, flinging about his great arms.

"Luckenough is in flames! My God! My God! Uncle! wake! wake!" she cried, shaking him frantically.

"Ah! ha! yes! d—d little rascal is at her tricks again!" he said, laughing in his sleep.

At that moment there was the sound of a falling rafter in the adjoining room. Every instant was worth a life, and there he lay in a sodden, hopeless sleep.

Oh, surely the angels who saved the children in the fiery furnace will hold up the sinking roof!

Suddenly Sans Souci ran to the ewer—it was empty. There was no time to be lost! every second was invaluable! He must be instantly roused, and Jacquelina was not fastidious as to the means in doing so!

Leaping upon the bolster behind his great, stupid head, she reached over, and seizing the mass of his gray, grizzly beard, she pulled up the wrong way, with all her might, until, roaring with pain, he started up in a fury, and seeing her, exclaimed,

"Oh! you abominable little vixen! is that you? Do you dare! Are you frantic, then? Oh, you outrageous little dare-devil! *Wont* I send you to a mad-house, and have you put in a straight-jacket, till you know how to behave yourself! You infernal little wretch you!"

A sudden thought struck Sans Souci, to move him by his affection for herself.

"Uncle, look around you! The house is burning! if you do not rouse yourself and save your poor little 'wretch,' she must perish in the flames!"

This effectually brought him to his senses; he understood everything! he leaped from the bed, seized a blanket, enveloped her in it, raised her in his arms, and forgetting gout, lameness, leg and all, bore her down the creaking, heated stairs, flight after flight, and through the burning passages out of the house, in safety.

Oh, surely the angels *had* held up that sinking roof, that, as soon as they had passed in safety, fell with an awful resonance, sending up new flames to Heaven, bearing, as it were, the story of the young girl's heroism.

A shout of joy greeted the Commodore, as he appeared with Jacquelina in the yard.

But heeding nothing but the burden he bore in his arms, the old sailor strode on until he reached a convenient spot, where he threw the blanket off her face to give her air.

She had fainted—the terror and excitement had been too great—the reaction was too powerful—it had overwhelmed her, and she lay insensible across his arms, her fair head hanging back, her white garments streaming in the air, her golden locks floating, her witching eyes closed, and her blue lips apart, and rigid on her glistening teeth—so she lay like dead Cordelia in the arms of old Lear.

Henrietta and Mrs. L'Oiseau, followed by all the household, crowded around them, with water, the only restorative at hand.

At length she recovered and looked up, a little bewildered, but soon memory and understanding returned, and gazing at her uncle, she suddenly threw her arms around his neck, and burst into tears.

She was then carried away into one of the best negro quarters, and laid upon a bed, and attended by her mother and her maid Maria.

The Commodore, with his wife, found shelter in another quarter. And the few remaining members of the household were accommodated in a similar manner elsewhere.

They had scarcely got within doors when the storm, that had been muttering in the distance all the forepart of the night, now burst upon the earth. The rain came down in torrents, like another deluge, and continued with unabated violence until morning.

The sun arose upon a strange, wild scene—a scene of beauty and of desolation! There was the greensward and shrubberies, and the surrounding belt of forest, all verdant and spangled with rain-drops, and sparkling in the fresh light of morning—and there, in the midst, was the ruin, with its blackened walls and chimneys! The fire had been effectually extinguished by the floods of rain, but not until it had completed the work of destruction.

Nothing had been saved but the clothing in which the family stood. Something doubtless might have been secured from the flames had there been an organized action, or a leader, with presence of mind enough left to direct the crowd, who, panic-stricken by the suddenness, and the unprecedented nature of the catastrophe, had remained totally inactive.

The loss, complete as it was in regard to Luckenough, was not, however, very great; the house and the furniture were old, and might be considered to owe no farther service to their proprietor. For years there had been a talk of pulling down and rebuilding and refurnishing. The long deferred and doubtful matter was now precipitated and rendered certain. That was all. After a rude breakfast, the best that could be prepared under the circumstances, a family council was called, and it was decided that they should go to B—— for the present, until some other course was fixed upon, especially as Jacquelina was very ill and needed immediate medical attendance.

The stables had not been burned, and the carriage and horses were safe. Festus and Bill were directed to bring them around, while Maria, mounted on a mule, was despatched to the nearest neighbor to borrow clothing for the burnt-out family.

It was near noon before they were all ready to set forth from the scene of disaster. and it was the middle of the afternoon when they found themselves temporarily settled at the little hotel at Benedict, in the very apartments formerly occupied by Edith and Marian.

Here Jacquelina suffered a long and severe spell of illness, during which her bright hair was cut off.

And here beautiful Marian came, with her gift of tender nursing, and devoted herself day and night to the service of the young invalid. And all the leisure time she found while sitting by the sick bed she busily employed in making up clothing for the almost denuded family. And never had the dear girl's nimble fingers flown so fast or so willingly.

Every day the Commodore, accompanied by Dr. Grimshaw, rode over to Luckenough to superintend the labors of the workmen in pulling down and clearing away the ruins of the old mansion, and preparing the site for a new building.

Six weeks passed and brought the first of August, before Jacquelina was able to sit up, and then the physicians recommended change of air and the waters of Bentley Springs for the re-establishment of her health.

During her illness, Jacquelina had become passionately attached to Marian, as all persons did who came under the daily influence of the beautiful girl. Dr. Grimshaw was to accompany the family to Bentley. Jacquelina insisted that Marian should be asked to make one of the party. Accordingly, the Commodore and Mrs. Waugh, nothing loth, invited and pressed the kind maiden to go with them. But for many reasons Marian declined the journey—first, she could not or would not leave Edith, except upon missions of benevolence or necessity—secondly, now that her services were no longer needed, she did not wish to accept the hospitality of the uncle from whom her sister was still estranged; and, lastly, had neither of these great reasons existed, a smaller one equally cogent would have prevented her becoming one of the party, namely—Marian had no proper wardrobe for the occasion. Two or three coarse, light-blue ginghams, and lilac calicoes, and one white dress, constituted Marian's summer outfit. The dear maiden was too disinterested, too much the servant of the public, to have accumulated anything beyond the necessities of clothing for herself. Therefore, when her duties as nurse and seamstress were over Marian rejoined Edith.

And Commodore Waugh, with his wife, his niece, and his Grim', set out in the family carriage for Bentley Springs.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MOCK-TOURNAMENT.

> The lovely stranger stands confessed
> A maid in all her charms."—*Goldsmith.*

It was Jacquelina's first visit to a watering place, and it might be said to be her first entrance into society. Her health rapidly improved, and she gave herself up to pleasure with all the enthusiasm of a novice. None so gay as she! Her hair had not been cut so close but that it would curl and cluster in little golden rings around her laughing forehead—giving new piquancy to the fairy face. She was the newest beauty there.

Near the last of the season, there was a project started that enlisted all Jacquelina's interest—this was a mock-tournament, to be followed by a masked ball. She entered into the spirit of the thing with all her heart and soul. as usual. Indeed, it was believed by those who had good opportunities of judging. that the fairy herself was the invisible inspirer and instigator of the whole affair; that she dropped a hint here, and a hint there, in the proper quarters, where her suggestions would fall like sparks of fire on combustible material, until the whole company at the Springs were a-blaze with excitement upon the subject of the mock-tournament.

And all the young men, and many of the elder ones, passed several hours daily in practicing; and already there was such a difference in skill displayed, that confident predictions were made as to which should carry off the ring the greatest number of times, and which should be the second, and the third, in success, etc.

Jacquelina listened to all this with the greatest gravity, only there was such an unfathomable depth of mischief lurking in her demure eyes!

The ladies were equally busy with the subject of the characters to be assumed, and the dresses to be worn at the fancy ball.

An agent was procured and dispatched to the city, with written directions to select materials for the fancy dresses, mock armor, etc.

Everybody knew, of course, that it was going to be a burlesque, and expected and prepared for nothing else. I must pass over the bustle of the preparations that occupied two weeks, and the accession of company from the neighboring towns and villages and the country round about, that poured into Bentley to see the wonder of the mock-tournament—the actors in which knew perfectly well that they were making fools of themselves, but they did so with purpose, "prepense and aforethought," and no less zealously upon that account.

The great day of the tournament came at last. I suppose it is necessary to give some idea of the scene in which the splendid spectacle of the tenth century was revived and travestied in the nineteenth.

The hour was fixed for noon. The site was well selected.

Imagine an open plain, ending at the south with a high, steep cliff, crowned with a forest, which at noon cast a long, dense shadow. Under the shade of this cliff were erected the seats of the spectators, wooden benches, raised one above the other, backwards. Here, at an early hour, were assembled and seated the greater number of the visitors of the Springs—that is to say, all the ladies and children, and such of the gentlemen as did not take active part in the burlesque.

Opposite these seats, at the extreme north of the plain, under a canopy, the King-at-Arms, with heralds and pursuivants, in costume, held his court.

At the east end was the gate through which the "knights" entered—here were also stationed heralds and pursuivants in fancy dresses.

Opposite, at the west extremity, was the gate through which they (the knights) issued, and here were stationed the "minstrels," —that is to say, a modern band of music—silent now, but to strike up a triumphant peal at the pass of every victorious knight.

Now, if you fancy that this mock-tournament is to be an encounter of gallant knights with shield and lance, I am sorry to disappoint you. We cannot even so much as *travestie* those things now. Few men now would like, even in sport, to meet an opponent in such thunder-shocks! No! It was an encounter only of lance and ring—a feat of agility—an exhibition of sleight-of-hand, quickness and sureness of eye, and skillful and elegant horsemanship—no more.

And now take notice—a well rolled gravel-road was made to traverse the plain from the east gate, at which the knights were to enter to the west gate, from which they were finally to issue. Midway across this road stood what looked precisely like a gibbet, with a noose hanging down. Don't be shocked however! For it was a much more merry matter. That was a rope certainly that hung down midway from the cross-beam—and at the end of that rope was a small steel hook, with its point towards the west. Upon that hook hung an iron ring of four inches in diameter. Now the feat to be accomplished was this —for the rider, while in full gallop, to bear off the ring on the point of his lance.

Among the spectators were of course our rustic family from Luckenough—the Commodore, Mrs. Waugh, Mrs. L'Oiseau, and Dr. Grimshaw—all except Jacquelina! and all taking the greatest interest in the scene about to be performed.

Poor Jacquelina! Unlucky Sans Souci! It really seemed a very great pity, after *all* the zeal she had displayed in the getting up of this frolic—that on the very morning of its enactment, she should be seized with—oh! such a maddening nervous headache! A headache that "ached" so dreadfully, she could not bear a ray of light or the sound of a footfall—a headache that nothing but utter darkness and silence and profound rest could mitigate. She vowed that she was sure, if she heard any one within ten feet of her room-door, she should fall into fits. And so she had every window-shutter closed, and sent Grim', and the Commodore, and her mother, and her aunty, and the maid Maria, all in turn, out of her room—protesting that if she was not left alone, she should go into convulsions! But if *only* permitted to go quietly to sleep, she should be better in the afternoon. And so, at her urgent desire, she was left alone in the dark room, with a lump of ice at her head, and mustard-plasters on the soles of her feet.

Everybody pitied Miss L'Oiseau, but soon forgot her in the excitement of the coming scene.

"Poor Lapwing! how unfortunate that she should be sick this day of *all* days," said Mrs. Waugh, "but she seemed right well content, too, and doubtless she will be much better this afternoon, and be able to assist at the fancy ball," added the lady, comforting herself that she might the better enjoy the scene about to commence.

A herald in a blue tunic blew his trumpet at the northern extremity of the area, proclaiming the lists open, and the tournament about to commence. At the east gate, another herald, in a yellow tunic, repeated the proclamation. And at the west, another in red reiterated it. These officials were termed by the uninitiated crowd, "the red boy," "the yellow boy," and "the blue boy!" A goodly number of competitors, in fancy dresses and mock armor, were congregated at the eastern gate. The "blue boy," in a sonorous voice, proclaimed their names and titles. The characters assumed for the occasion were—alas for modesty and veneration!—the very greatest heroes of the middle ages; among them, "Richard Cœur-de-Lion," the "Black Prince," "Harry, of England," (Henry V.) "Hotspur," "Sir William Wallace," etc. There were also some of a more comic character, (it was *all* comic enough,) there were Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Sir Hudibras, etc. But the name of the *first* competitor was about to be proclaimed, and a dead silence ensued.

"The Knight of Malta!" shouted the herald from the north, whose voice was, unluckily, very thick.

"The Knight of the *Altar!*" repeated the east herald, whose ears were no better than the other's voice, and,

"The Knight of the—HALTER!" vociferated the west herald, who was too far off to hear well.

"Oh! that is too funny! Poor Lapwing! How she would enjoy that!" said Mrs. Waugh.

But just then the Knight of the "Halter" dashed forward on the road, with his lance balanced lightly in his right hand—and without pausing or slackening his speed in the least, sped through the area, and bore off the ring! The band of music struck up a triumphal air, and the spectators gave a shout of congratulation. The successful aspirant turned and rode around the area, and fell into his place. And the ring was restored to its station.

And then the name of another candidate was proclaimed in turn by the three heralds, and he rode forward. This was a splendid equestrian—but alas, as he sped through the course, he only *touched*, and did not carry off the ring; and the music kept a dead silence, while he rode back crest-fallen, with his lance trailing by the saddle-bow.

Then came a third candidate, who also missed; and then a fourth, who carried off the ring; and a fifth and a sixth, who failed even to touch it; and a seventh and eighth, who bore it off in triumph. And thus, with more or less success, all the candidates who had failed were ruled out from the list of competitors, while those who had succeeded remained for a second trial of skill.

There were but nine competitors in the second course. And this passed off with the like success as the first—that is to say, less than one-half the candidates succeeded. Five failed, and had their names stricken off the list. Four remained to try the third course. These were "The Black Prince," "Hotspur," "Don Quixote De La Mancha," and "The Knight of Malta," alias of the "Halter."

With the narrowing down of the number of competitors, the excitement of the actors, as well as of the spectators, arose. On the part of the rivals there was of course more fatigue, and less steady coolness than before. Perhaps it was upon this account, that in riding the third course, three of the competitors failed, while only one, "The Knight of Malta," succeeded, thus remaining, as he and every one else supposed, sole victor of the field!

Not as they knew of, however! "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," and "oft expectation fails, and *most* oft there where most it promises." For while the victor knight, bearing aloft the ring upon the point of his lance, was careering around the field, and the ladies were waving handkerchiefs and casting bouquets in his way, and while the triumphant music was pealing, and the crowd was shouting, and the trumpets blowing, and the heralds vociferating, and the "King-at-Arms" preparing to proclaim, through his marshals, that the renowned "Knight of Malta" was the victor of the day, and entitled to the honor of crowning the lady of his fealty Queen of Beauty and Love—hark! the winding of a horn, whose piercing notes penetrated through all grosser sounds, and announced the advent of a new challenger!

And lo! at the west gate, a vision of dazzling splendor! Sun and stars and diamonds, how radiant! It was a young knight, a mere stripling, in what seemed silver plated scale armor, that glanced and flashed in the sunlight with blinding radiance—his helmet was encircled by a diadem of what seemed precious stones—diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, that sparkled, glowed, and blazed in rays of many colored fire, crested with a snow white plume—his steed was white, with housings of white satin, wrought with a deep border of silver lilies, and finished with a deep fringe of silver threads. Light, graceful, ærial, and dazzlingly radiant, was this resplendent vision! All the crowd arose to look, and then turned their half blinded eyes away.

A herald from the King-at-Arms demanded his name, lineage, and country.

"Prince Ariel, from the Court of Fairy."

His errand at the tournament?

To challenge the victor knight to a trial of a dozen rounds! This was very trying indeed, just in the moment of victory. But by all the gallant and generous usages of chivalry, this challenge must not be refused—besides, the Fairy Prince was such a mere sprite—not likely to conquer in *material* contests. The assembly also, by acclamation, demanded that the challenge should be accepted. And it was accepted. Order was restored. Lots were drawn for the first trial, which fell on the fortunate Knight of Malta.

Once more, with lance balanced in his right hand, the knight spurred on his charger towards the arch, and passed under it, carrying off the ring. And while he rode round the area, the crowd shouted, and the music pealed forth as before.

It was now the turn of the Fairy Prince. He was stationed at the west gate. With a swift, smooth, wavy motion, he galloped on, his silver armor glancing in the sun rays, passed under the arch, and carried off the ring. And the music struck up, the crowd applauded, etc.

The Knight of Malta's turn. He dashed on, with lance held as before, and passed under the arch, bearing off the ring, amid the usual peals and plaudits.

And then again the Fairy Prince. He sped forward, like arrow to its aim, swept through the arch, and bore off the prize, amid the acclamations of the impartial multidude, and the thunders of the music.

So far the success was equal, although the Fairy Prince far surpassed the Knight in elegance, and ærial grace of carriage. And this equality of success continued for several more rounds.

At length, however, the Prince seemed to wish to bring the contest to a crisis. And when his turn came round, instead of sweeping onward like a flash of lightning, as he had done before, he set forward in a gentle amble, until he got within a few feet of the arch, when he backed his horse for a flying leap, aimed his lance, and vaulted through, carrying off the ring upon the point, and falling again into the gentle amble, finished the course; then turning on his road, he rode back, and in the act of vaulting through the arch, replaced the ring upon the hook, amid deafening thunders of applause.

This was a feat that had not been attempted before. The Knight of Malta, thus tacitly challenged to rival this skill, declined the attempt, and in all knightly courtesy yielded the palm to Fairy Prince as Victor of the Day.

The excitement of the crowd was unprecedented. Every man was up on his feet. Every lady was waving her handkerchief. The band of music went mad, and raved away in a perfect storm of triumph. The heralds nearly split their throats blowing the trumpets. And the King-at-Arms, and all his marshals, vociferated themselves hoarse, in trying to "conquer a peace."

At length, however, silence was restored.

And then "Prince Ariel, of Fairyland," was pronounced victor of the day, and entitled to the honor of crowning his liege lady Queen of Beauty and Love.

But who *was* the radiant Prince Ariel, and who was the lady of his choice? *That* was the question that excited to the utmost the interest of the breathless assembly.

He had received the crown from the King-at-Arms, and was about to indicate his queen by the act of coronation! What lady would she be?

He now rode around the area, bearing the crown in his hand, and approaching the seats of the spectators, paced along beneath them, his snow-white charger prancing in its spangled white housings, his silver armor flashing in the sun, his diadem of precious stones burning like a circlet of fire around his helmet, his snow-white plume dancing above his closed vizor Oh, who *was* the dazzling Fairy Prince?

Reader, have you ever doubted his identity for a single moment?

But lo! he has paused before a group among the spectators. Expectation is on tip-toe! All bend their eyes to that focus! But how is this? It is our rustic party from Luckenough, and there is no fair lady in the group! What can the Fairy Prince mean? All eyes are riveted to the spot. And the Commodore and his party don't know what to make of it at all. The Commodore's eyes are distended to their widest ability. And the rest of the party wait in breathless expectancy! They have a faint impression that the victor is in search of Jacquelina.

The Fairy Prince now bows before the group, until the snow-white crest sweeps the snow-white housings of the steed; and, placing the crown upon the point of his lance, he raises it and lays it at the feet of—THE COMMODORE.

A shout of laughter rends the air! The veteran blushed black with embarrassment, shame and anger, at what he considers an attempt to turn him into ridicule. But the multitude shout—"Take up the offering, gallant Commodore! Take it up! See you not that the tribute was made to your beautiful niece, the lovely Miss L'Oiseau, whom we are sorry to miss from this tournament, but whom we shall be glad to hear presently proclaimed the queen of love and beauty!" "Unmask! Unmask, gallant knight, and declare yourself, that we may know whom to name when we toast the victor!"

Tremendous is the sensation, deafening the shouts and cheers when the Fairy Prince raises his visor and reveals the golden hair, and laughing brow, and malicious blue eyes of our Sans Souci!

"Oh good! that girl will be the death of me! She absolutely makes my heart beat in the back of my head, and my shoulders open and shut like a pair of clap-boards!" groans the overwhelmed Commodore.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SPRITE IN THE CONVENT.

> "Now is it not a pity such a merry girl as I,
> Should be sent to a nunnery to pine away and die?"

THE mock-tournament had broken up in disorder—the company gathering into knots to discuss this last eccentricity of Miss L'Oiseau, or dispersing to laugh at it in their own apartments.

The Commodore, with a grip of Jacquelina's shoulder, sent her along before him and his party, until they reached their own private parlor.

"And now you—*what* shall I call you? *What* shall I say to you? Was ever a man so bedeviled as I am!" he exclaimed, standing her before him.

"Have patience, uncle! 'Patience, and smoke your pipe!'"

"I'll be shot if I do! Where did you get that masquerading dress, you little minx?"

"I ran you in debt for it, uncle! It cost only three hundred dollars."

"Three hun——WHAT?"

"Yes, you see, it's not real precious metal and precious stones—it's only the best o' tin and colored glass—nothing's real in it but the white plumes! And aunty can have *them* for her winter bonnet if she wants them. And that'll be a real saving!" said Sans Souci, very demurely, her wicked eyes sparkling with internal fun.

The Commodore trotted up and down, making short, impatient turns in the narrow room, like a chafed old lion in his cage, and grunting.

"Ugh! ugh! ugh! She crushes me! She presses me! I feel like a lemon between the squeezers, with every drop of blood starting from every pore of my skin. Ugh! ugh! You little imp of Satan, you! Where in thunder did you think I was to get three hundred dollars to pay for your deviltries?"

"Nowhere in thunder, sir."

"I *wont* pay for it! there, Minx!"

"Just as you please, uncle! Only do remember that you gave the agent a *carte blanche* to get any fancy dress I should order, and I fancied ordering this!"

"It was a breach of trust! It was an abominable breach of trust! And three hundred dollars for so much flashy trash!"

"Ha, ha, ha! be comforted, uncle! Since you are so stingy, let me tell you that your niece's fancy dress cost you next to nothing. The agent hired it for her from a pantomime company!"

The Commodore uttered a cry, and dropped down into a chair as if he had been shot. He was really *shocked.*

"All the fiends alive! Henrietta, *do* you hear that! Mary, do *you* hear that! She has actually dressed herself in the common property dress of some theatre or other! Ugh! ugh! ugh! She—she's a visitation of wrath! she—she's a judgment on me for my sins! Ugh! ugh! She's a cleaving madness, she is! 'A pantomime property,' you——! Get out of my sight this instant, you imp, before I'm tempted to murder you!"

"Don't fret and fume, uncle—it will bring on the gout!"

"Begone!"

"Don't fret, uncle! I have only been joking with you! Why I would no more wear second hand costume, than—than—you would have me to do it. The agent had this suit made to order for me and it did not cost much either—a mere trifle!"

"Who can put any confidence in what you say, you elf?"

"Everybody can, uncle! *You* can when I assure you that I am telling the truth! And since you spoke of the price, let me tell you again that this cost only—"

"D—l take the cost! I'm not thinking of the *cost*, but of your conduct—"

"Yes! didn't I do it beautifully, uncle? Aint you proud of me now? Aint I an honor to you?"

"You're a—catastrophe! Get out of my sight! Begone! And don't let me see you again for a week!"

Jacquelina laughed, and started, her mock armor jingling like silver bells as she went.

When the door closed after her a family council was held. Henrietta sat there, taking things as quietly as she usually took them. But Mary L'Oiseau was pale with surprise, dismay, and dread, until the Commodore, turning to her, said,

"Well, madam! What do you think I shall have to do with this precious girl of yours?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said the timorous creature, beginning to weep. "I always knew it would turn out just so!"

"Just how?"

"I always knew Jacquelina would give you offence, and then—and then—"

"Well, and then—what? Can't you speak, Mary?"

But Mary was weeping.

"I ask you what you think had best be done with her."

"Oh! I'm sure I don't know! I can't defend her! You must do exactly as you think fit! I shan't interfere!"

"No matter *what* I decide to do with her?"

"No, indeed! for I'm perfectly weary and worn out with contending with her follies."

"Well, then, I'll marry her to Grim'—right off!"

"Oh, no! not that! She is but fifteen! she is too young! Besides, she wouldn't consent now! She'd be sure to be mulish! Wait for two or three years, until she is old enough, and has sense enough to see the advantages of such a marriage—then she'll consent."

"Then she will be sure to do just as Edith did! Especially as it will be some time before Luckenough is built up, and we shall have to board in the village, where we shall see all sorts of people, and she'll have beaux, and who can prevent it?"

"But can't you send her to some convent-school for a year or two, until we are settled again at Luckenough, or until she is old enough to be married?" suggested Mrs. L'Oiseau, meekly and whimperingly.

"To a convent-school—I never thought of that before—let me see now—yes! I think that will do—the life is very secluded, and the discipline very strict. Yes! that is very good. She shall go and stay a year, and then she shall come out and marry Grim'. That is excellent! Really, Mary, when you're put to it you have got more sense than anybody would think! I'll go and talk to Grim' about it!"

And, leaving the two ladies alone, the Commodore went in quest of Doctor Grimshaw, whom, after a long search, he found walking up and down a secluded avenue of the lawn in much disturbance of mind. Perhaps of all her friends who had been present at the mock tournament, Doctor Grimshaw had been the most severely shocked and scandalized by the feats of his betrothed. Yet now that the Commodore addressed him, and, walking up and down with him, explained his plans in regard to Jacquelina, Grim' shook his head. He did not like to part with his favorite—did not know what they should do without her at home, and did not believe it safe to send her to a nunnery.

"Do you know the partridge never *can* be tamed, and dies if it is caged? My fairy love is like the partridge. If she is put in the convent she will drive the sisters mad, or break her own heart. Don't send her away. Wait till we are married. I am sure I can reform her, and make her happy also."

"Yes! but I tell you," said the Commodore, "that unless you consent to part with her for a time, you *may never* marry her! Where we are going to live it will be impossible to separate her from young people of her own age, even from Thurston Willcoxen, and what would you think now if I should tell you that *already* her fancy has been touched by that young man from merely seeing him at church?"

Doctor Grimshaw started and changed color—jealousy had entered his heart for the first time—jealousy of the elegant Thurston Willcoxen.

"He must not be permitted to form her acquaintance! He must not be permitted to enter the house where she lives!"

"I should like to know how *that's* to be prevented while we are boarding, unless I send her to school as I purposed."

"Something else must be thought of. I cannot lose her society. And I cannot consent that she shall suffer constraint. We must find some other plan."

While Doctor Grimshaw was thus pleading the cause of his elfish love, a waiter approached and handed him a little triangular note. His sallow face flushed when he saw that it was from Jacquelina. It contained the following flattering proposition: That—as her mother and her aunty had declined being present at the fancy ball of that evening, and had determined that she should not appear unless escorted by Doctor Grimshaw—*therefore* she had decided upon taking a character which would afford him a fitting opportunity of attending her in costume—she should appear as Beauty in the fairy tale of "Beauty and the Beast." Would he therefore please to come as the Beast? She had selected this, she said, in consideration of his convenience, because it would require so little modification of his usual appearance and manner. If he did not like that, however—would he be Vulcan to her Venus? She offered him the choice; she only wished to please him, she was sure.

Dr. Grimshaw was not unaccustomed to this style of compliment from the highly provoked and equally provoking fairy. And previous to this day he had received her witty jibes and taunts and sarcasms with a patience and philosophy which was not without some natural dignity, as if he had felt that a man of his years and learning, and highly respectable standing in church and state, must not suffer himself to be disturbed by the quaint petulance of an elf. But now his bosom was vulnerable, for his heart was sore with new-felt jealousy—jealousy of the all-praised Thurston Willcoxen. And he felt her shafts keenly. At any time before this, he would have borne his suffering in silence; now, stung by jealousy, he cried out bitterly—

"Yes! Beast! Vulcan! Ogre! Afrit! Gnome! Ghoul! Goblin! Nightmare! Vampire! Warlock! Giraffe! Griffin! Dragon! Leprehaun! Kelpie! Old Man of the Sea! Her vocabulary of abuse is *inexhaustible*, and these are the love names she calls me by!"

"In the name of all the demons, Grim', what the d—l *does* ail you? What the furies are you driving at?" exclaimed the Commodore, with his great round eyes staring with all their might at his excited companion.

At another time, Dr. Grimshaw would have concealed the tricks of his elfish love, and so shielded her from her uncle's wrath. But jealousy is as mean and spiteful in some stages, as it is terrible and remorseless in others. It is said to be "as cruel as the grave;" it is also loathsome as the worm that battens therein. He passed Jacquelina's little squib of a note to the Commodore, where it acted like a lighted match thrown into a barrel of gunpowder. The old soldier exploded into fury; abusing the poor fairy without measure, calling her names that would never bear repetition here, and swearing horribly profane oaths that he would send her to the nunnery, where she should remain until she knew how to behave herself. And as to the fancy ball of that night, she should not appear at it *at all*, in any character or under any escort whatever. She should, on the contrary, keep her own chamber, where she would have leisure to repent of her wickedness, he reckoned. But for the Commodore to reckon without Jacquelina in anything that materially concerned herself, was not safe.

It is true he put his threat in execution—and locked the poor elf up in her room, and took away the key, lest some one should release her. But Jacquelina laughed at his cunning, and with the point of her scissors, inserted between the lock and the catch, easily turned back the bolt and set herself at liberty.

And that evening, in the midst of the fancy ball, when everybody had seen everybody else, and curiosity was satisfied, and the excitement apparently over, a great sensation was created by the sudden rising of a new star, who was announced as the

Elfin Princess Maligna—who never unmasked, but in the course of the evening contrived to set more people by the ears together, and excite more lover's quarrels, and cause more surprises, and panics, and starts and tremors, than had probably ever afflicted any one night, since "the morning and the evening were the first day." And at cock-crow she vanished. No one could have sworn to the identity, but it would have been impossible for Jacquelina to have proved an *alibi* during the hours passed by the Elfin Princess at the fancy ball.

The next morning the fay was cited to appear before the family court, which held its session in the private parlor. And there she was informed of her doom, to be sent to the nunnery to school for one year.

To the surprise of all, Jacquelina received this sentence with great calmness—only her eyes were really flashing beneath their demure lids, her lips were puckered up with a suppressed smile, and her whole form and face were instinct with the concealed anticipation of some unprecedented mischief and delicious fun. Oh! she was willing to go to the nunnery, certainly! there was nothing she would like better or so well! And so it was settled.

The season at Bentley was now over. The visiters in numbers were leaving. And the family of Luckenough prepared to follow their example.

They returned to the lodgings at B——, where they were once more settled by the middle of September. Preparations were then commenced for the outfit of Jacquelina. Her mother wept incessantly at the thought of parting from her darling though willful child, from whom she had never been separated in her life. Jacquelina sought to comfort her.

"Don't fret, Mimmy; *I'll be back in a week!*" she said, mysteriously.

"Not so soon as that, my dear, I know. But, oh! Jacky, I never loved but you; and I do hope that your conduct will be so exemplary that your uncle will soon shorten the term of your imprisonment, and recall you. For I know that if he hears good reports of you from the sisters, he will sacrifice the price of the whole term, and bring you home before it is over; for, with all his faults, he is not stingy."

"No, indeed! And never you mind, Mimmy, *my conduct shall be such that I will return in a week!*"

"I hope so, indeed, my love; but it will not be quite so soon as that, I fear!"

"Oh, Mimmy, you *always* fear something! I tell you *I shall behave in such a way as to be brought back in a week!*"

"Well, my love, may be so; but I fear your old uncle wont trust so sudden a reform as that!"

The convent-school selected for Jacquelina, was that of St. Serena, situated on Mount Serena, in a distant, hilly, and highly picturesque county. The day of her departure arrived, and with many tears the members of the family took leave of Jacquelina, who, with ill suppressed mirth and mischief peeping out from under her downcast eyelids, and out of the corners of her pursed up lips, entered the carriage with her uncle, and commenced her journey. The afternoon of the second day brought them near their journey's end.

There is not in all the south a more beautiful country than that which surrounds the convent whose name I shall purposely veil under that of Mount St. Serena. It is broken, hilly, and mountainous, clothed with fine forests, watered by crystal streams, and varied by rocks, caverns and waterfalls.

A road through this highly picturesque scenery, running now by the side of a forest-shaded river, now under the shadow of some extended cliff; winding now around the base of some wooded hill, and now through the tortuous defile of some mountain pass, brought our travelers finally within the precincts of the convent grounds.

A carriage drive through a fine piece of woods led them to the banks of the narrow, rock-bound, forest-shaded, beautiful river, St. Serena, where a ferry boat waited to take them across.

Upon the rising ground on the opposite side, in the midst of a grove of trees, gleamed the white walls and chimneys of the convent buildings. The main building, and all the lesser ones dependent upon it, were in the pure and elegant style of Grecian architecture. The grounds around them were highly improved and adorned with artificial lakes, grottos, groves, groups of statuary, arbors, shaded walks, and everything that wealth in the hands of taste could procure to perfect them in beauty and pleasure. And surrounding all was the undulating, hilly and mountainous country that I have described.

The carriage containing our travelers entered the ferry boat, and was poled across the river.

Passing up a gentle ascent, they entered by a handsome gate upon a graveled and elm-shaded drive, that conducted them up to the front of the convent—a handsome, white granite front, with a portico supported by light Ionic columns, running the whole width.

Here the carriage stopped, and the Commodore alighted, followed by Jacquelina, whom he led up the marble stairs to the main entrance.

The door stood wide open, and at once they entered the hall, across which, about six feet before them, stretched an iron grating, behind which sat a closely-veiled nun, with a great key—this was the porteress of the nunnery.

The old Commodore, keeping a respectful distance, bowed low and explained his business, and requested to see the Mother Superior.

The porteress, without raising her veil, merely pointed to a door on their side of the grating, and on the left of the hall.

The Commodore bowed again, and conducted Jacquelina through that door into a plainly but neatly furnished parlor,—across the centre of which, from side to side, and from floor to ceiling, ran the same iron grating.

Silently behind the grating appeared the shadow of the Lady Superior. She was a comely and benignant looking woman, of about thirty years of age, and spoke in a voice so pleasant that its tones haunted the ear for days afterwards.

As everything had been pre-arranged by an epistolary correspondence between herself and Commodore Waugh, there was now nothing to do but to deliver Jacquelina into her hands, and take leave.

The Commodore's heart sank lower and lower as the instant of departure hastened on. He detained his little "Minx" as long as possible—he would even now have gladly taken her back with him, had such a step been advisable for the prosperity of his private plans—he wished to gather her to his bosom and kiss her fondly—but he durst not do so within those holy walls, or in that holy presence; so, pressing her hand, and bidding her "be a good girl," and finally kissing her cheek in the most decorous manner, he took leave and departed, bitterly regretting the untoward fate that compelled him to leave his "Monkey" in "that gloomy prison," as he chose to miscall the most beautiful and enchanting place under the sun.

Never distress yourself, Commodore! It would be difficult or impossible to reduce Jacquelina to a strait from which she could not deliver herself just as soon as she pleased. And while you are bemoaning her fate as you roll along towards home, *her* little head is busy in the devising of new mischief, which shall make you lament and deplore with much better reason than you do now. As the Mother Superior led Jacquelina along, she addressed her in a pleasant voice, saying,

"My dear, are you fatigued, and would you like to go to the dormitory and lie down?"

"No, mother, I am not the least tired."

"This is the recreation hour, and the pupils, your future companions, are in the back lawn, amusing themselves; perhaps you would like to join them?"

"Yes, mother."

The lady then conducted Jacquelina through the great hall, down the back stairs, and out into the back lawn—where a peerless vision of beauty burst upon the sight of the young girl.

If the grounds in front of the house were admirably laid out and adorned, those at the back were far more charming from natural beauty. In the midst was a small crystal lake, or pond, half surrounded by trees; green mounds and groves of trees stood here and there; and rocks and ravines, and banks of wild flowers and parterres of cultivated plants, diversified the scene. These grounds were terminated by or rather ran into a fine piece of woods that climbed up the sides of steep hills.

Here were assembled about one hundred young girls from the ages of seven to seventeen—engaged in various amusements. Some were skipping ropes, some trundling hoops, some swinging, some mounted on Shetland ponies were pacing around the outskirts of the grounds, and some were in little boats rowed by the nuns upon the lake—while others of quieter temperaments, were cultivating the flowers in the parterres, or gathered under the shade of trees, were dressing dolls or telling stories.

"Young ladies," said the Mother Superior, as she appeared with Jacquelina, "this is Miss L'Oiseau, of St. Mary county. I hope that you will make her welcome, and make her feel at home among you."

Then calling one or two girls of about Jacquelina's own age, she introduced her to them, and left her in their care.

But our fairy scarcely needed their introduction and patronage; wherever there was youth and high spirits to be excited, or dullness to be exasperated, or mischief in any shape or form to be done, there was Jacquelina "at home."

And soon the sprite had thrown herself like yeast into the crowd of young folks, and soon the whole mass was rising in a state of fermentation. The swings flew higher, the skipping-ropes turned faster, the Shetland ponies no longer paced, but galloped, reared and pranced with their riders, and the little skiffs no longer floated gently, but dashed and splashed among the sparkling waters, as if a whole shoal of water nymphs were at play, until the nuns who rowed, assured their romping passengers that if they did not cease their sports, they would upset the boats. Even the quiet girls who had hitherto found excitement enough in tending flowers and dressing dolls, or telling stories, now arose and contended with the others for the possession of the swings and skipping-ropes. In a word, the whole pleasure grounds were in a state of irrepressible effervescence, when the supper-bell rang and three or four Sisters came out to marshal the girls to the refectory.

When supper was over, the crowd separated into their class-rooms, for the evening studies, after which they prepared to go to their various dormitories.

CHAPTER XVIII.

APPARITION IN THE DORMITORY.

"Art thou a MAN."—*Macbeth.*

JACQUELINA was assigned a place among the elder girls, whom she accompanied to their sleeping apartment, which was situated on the second floor.

Nothing in the convent that I have already described, excelled this place in beauty and purity of aspect; it seemed the very temple of Vesta—the innermost sanctuary of youth, beauty, and innocence

It was a long room, with snowy walls and ceiling and floor—flanked by two rows of windows, with snowy linen blinds—furnished with two rows of white beds, and their heads to the wall between the windows, and each closed in with curtains of white dimity.

Now, standing at the entrance of this pure sanctuary, look up the clear vista between the lines of snowy beds to the opposite extremity of the room, and see a beautiful arched shrine, veiled with the most delicate lace, which festoons each side, reveal, within, a life-like image of the Virgin, in white robes, with her meek hands crossed upon her sinless bosom, and her meek eyes bent as in thought. Some young girl's devotion has placed upon her brow a wreath of fresh, fragrant, white roses. To a poetic eye she seems to stand there the guardian of the slumbers of pure and beautiful young girlhood.

In the corners, to the extreme right and left of the Virgin's shrine, stood the bedsteads occupied by the two nuns who had charge of this dormitory, and the young girls who slept in it. These beds differed in no respect from those of the pupils, except they were a little larger.

Of the two duenna-nuns, Sister Agnes was a middle-aged lady, of severe and stately presence and stern rule.

Sister Rose was a woman of twenty-five, with a fresh, girlish countenance, and a pleasant smile and voice.

When Jacquelina was first introduced into this sweet, pure, peaceful retreat, she felt a sudden sharp pang—a sense of something unquiet, inhuman, elfish in her nature, at variance with the beautiful character of the scene—some discord at war with this harmony—some chaos incompatible with this order—some evil, in short, that she wished was not there.

Quietly each girl went within her own curtains to undress and go to bed. A few only gathered around the smiling Sister Rose for a good-night kiss. Some of the most warm-hearted and demonstrative, threw their arms around the beloved Sister and embraced her cordially.

But the stern Sister Agnes frowned upon such freedoms, which she declared appertained to "inordinate and sinful affections of the flesh."

This drew upon her the lightning flash of Jacquelina's eyes, and, alas! put to flight all the fairy's redeeming thoughts, and inspired her with a project of mischief which she resolved to put in execution, for the benefit of sour Sister Agnes, that very night. It was an unpardonable piece of diablerie, for which I can offer no palliation, except that the poor elf was on the high road to destruction, with not one wise friend to intervene and save her. And when you are inclined to severely blame poor Sans Souci, remember her educators.

At last, all the young creatures were in bed, with their curtains drawn around them—all except Jacquelina.

"Why don't you retire, my love?" inquired Sister Rose.

"Because I haven't got my night-clothes," said Jacquelina.

"Haven't got your night-clothes—why how is that, my dear, where are they?"

"Packed up in my trunk, wherever that may be."

"Oh! yes, to be sure. I beg your pardon, my dear. It was my business to have attended to this—but I really forgot it. I often do forget things. Come with me, my dear, into the wareroom; your trunk is there," said Sister Rose, taking up a taper, and leading the way.

They passed down a long passage, at the other end of which was the door leading into the wardrobe wareroom, where the clothing of the girls in this dormitory was kept, and where Jacquelina's trunk remained as yet unpacked.

They entered, and while Sister Rose stood with her eyes bent upon the ground, pattering an *Ave*, Jacquelina knelt and unlocked her trunk, took from it a night-dress and *another suit*, (of which more anon,) and wrapping them together in a tight bundle, locked her trunk again, and arose to her feet.

"It seems to me you have a large bundle there, my dear," said the Sister.

"Yes, I have other garments besides the night-dress," said Jacquelina.

"Ah, yes! I suppose, after traveling you need a change. That is all right, under the circumstances. But hereafter, my dear, remember that the pupils change only on Sundays and Wednesdays, and on those mornings you will find clean clothes laid out upon your bed," said the Sister, and taking her taper, she paced soberly along, leading the way back to the dormitory, and followed by Jacquelina.

When they entered it, Sister Rose walked up and sat her wax taper before the shrine of the Virgin, where it was intended to burn all night. Then she pointed out to Jacquelina the bed she was to occupy, drew her up, and kissed her cheek, saying,

"Good-night, love. I hope you will be happy with us. I hope you will sleep well. You mustn't be home-sick. All of us are separated from our parents and friends here, but we are very happy—as you will be after a few days. Good-night, and pleasant dreams to you, dear!"

And the kind Sister kissed her once again, and let go her hand.

And Jacquelina felt a twinge of compunction as she took herself and her mysterious bundle within her own curtains. She undressed and laid herself down, to wait until she should be reasonably sure that everybody in the room was asleep, before commencing operations.

Occasionally she peeped out between her curtains—how sweet and calm and pure was the aspect of the room, with its score of slumbering beauties, and the sleepless eyes of the Virgin watching over them! Oh, elfin Jacquelina, how could you bring wild confusion and dismay into such a sweet and peaceful scene?

She lay back upon her pillow, anxiously listening, until they should all be locked in the arms of slumber.

Occasionally was heard the soft rustling of some young creature in her bed, like the fluttering of some young bird in its nest. But soon all these sounds ceased. The fair sleepers were all in the land of fairy dreams.

But it seemed to Jacquelina that the sour Sister never would go to sleep—that she found no more favor in the eyes Morpheus, than of any other man. She sighed, and turned to the right, and then grunted and turned to the left; and she "Ah, me"-ed and "Oh, dear"-ed until the elf thought surely she must be suffering under that which is said to be the only real misery—great pain of body or remorse of mind. But it was neither of these things—it was only the sleeplessness caused by that good friend or bitter enemy, "green tea!"—

that real and only "green-eyed monster" extant. At length, however, Sister Agnes was also sound asleep, as was proved by her deep and regular breathing.

And Jacquelina peeped out between her curtains, and seeing everything still, and the Virgin herself looking sweetly placid, as i she did not deem much harm in her wild child's frolic, she drew in her little mischief-brewing head, and commenced operations.

Sitting up there in bed, she took off her night-cap and parted her hair in boyish style on one side, letting the short, bright, yellow curls cluster around her broad, fair forehead. Then she laid aside her night-wrapper, and dressed herself in *that other suit* aforesaid, which was no other than Cloudy's parade uniform! And lastly, she set the gold-laced and tasseled cap jauntily upon her shining curls.

And then she emerged from her hiding-place, and stood up, as charming looking a little officer as could be seen on a sunny day's review! All alive with mischief, she stood in the midst of the vista between the rows of snowy-curtained beds, and before the white-veiled shrine of the Virgin, thinking whom she should first startle out of their sleep, and out of their wits, by a kiss! She soon made up her mind, and with her eyes twinkling roguishly, she tripped softly up the vista to the right-hand corner bed, occupied by Sister Rose, and stood over the pretty slumberer.

How serene and sweet she seemed, with her fair cheeks slightly flushed by sleep, and one soft, white hand pressing the crucifix lovingly, unconsciously to her softer, whiter bosom.

Jacquelina's heart warmed towards her—she really wished now, not for "fun," but for love, to stoop and kiss her as she lay! But in *that* dress! Even elfish Jacko hesitated to do it, hesitated to shock that pure and gentle bosom! So she stood for a minute smiling on her. But the temptation to make mischief was too great, and bending over her, she kissed her—softly as a butterfly lights upon a flower, Sans Souci's lips touched sleeping Rose's

Rosa awoke, and opened her sweet eyes calmly enough, but seeing, as she supposed, a young officer standing gazing upon her, she gave one wild, wild shriek, and covered up her head, where she lay trembling, like a captured bird.

That shriek had roused all the sleepers.

Jacquelina dipped suddenly down, and darting along close to the floor, reached the inside of her curtains, when she quickly and quietly drew her wrapper over the uniform, hid the gold laced cap under her pillow, and replaced it by her night-cap, slipped into bed, drew the counterpane closely under her chin, and shut her eyes, as in a deep sleep.

In the meantime, all was confusion in the dormitory. Every girl was out of bed, trembling with undefined terror, and asking everybody what was the matter. Sister Agnes was up also, and scolding at the top of her voice. And poor Rose was crying, and lamenting, and wringing her hands.

Jacquelina now ventured to peep through her curtains—there stood Sister Rose, with flushed cheeks, and wild, tearful eyes, twisting her fingers, and weeping, and protesting, and there gathered the flock of girls in their night-dresses and bare feet, and there stood Sister Agnes laying down the law.

"Was *ever* such a distraction! What can you think of yourself, Sister Rose, to rouse all the school out of their beds with such a shriek as that! How do you know but you've wakened the pupils in the other dormitories, too? And the Mother Superior, for aught we know!"

"Oh! indeed, indeed it wasn't my fault! Indeed it wasn't!"

"It *was* your fault! If you had been thinking more of your aves and paters, and less of vanities, you would not have dreamed of seeing a——one of those creatures!"

"Oh! It was a man, it was a man! Indeed, indeed it was a man! It was a live man, and no dream! I never dream of those beings! Holy Virgin! no—Heaven forbid!"

"You *have* dreamed! Why, you must be *still* dreaming! Are you crazy? Man indeed! St. Mary! I'm shocked at you! It is really indecent! How could one of those affairs get in?

Where could he hide? I believe you've lost your reason! You must think a great deal about such—persons! The truth is, you're too hearty! I've noticed it a long time! you eat too much, and that is the reason you have had dreams! You shall keep a strict fast to-morrow, and after this you shall fast three times a week, until you have somewhat mortified the pride of your flesh. And if *that* don't do, and if we are disturbed by any more of your dreams and outcries, I shall have you deposed from your place here in the dormitory, and sent back to your cell! And I'll speak to Mother Ethelle about it to-morrow! A pretty example for these girls! Now, young ladies, return, every one of you, to your beds, and let no more hysterical shrieks, from *any one*, bring you out of them! And, Sister Rose, do you return to *yours*, and be sure to repeat one hundred Ave Marias and Our Fathers before you venture to close your eyes!" said the angry Sister Agnes.

Some of the girls turned to seek once more their pillows. But Rose caught the robe of Sister Agnes, and said,

"Oh, Sister! pray, pray have the room searched! There was a man in it!"

"Have done with such sinful fancies!" exclaimed Sister Agnes, angrily.

"Oh, Holy Virgin! will *nothing* convince her? And are we all to go to bed while there is such a monster in the room!"

"You certainly *are* frantic! You want blood-letting! Will you look around now upon those well-secured windows, and that double-locked door, and tell me, even supposing such a creature could possibly get through the outer grate, how it could get in *here*, or being in, where it could hide, or how it could get out? You're a fool, Sister Rose! St. Mary forgive me!"

But Sister Rose persisted that she had spoken the truth, and pleaded so earnestly to have the room searched, that all the young girls, with one accord, flitted out of their beds like birds from their nests, and looked underneath them—looked everywhere—went to Miss L'Oiseau's bed and looked under that, then peeped between her curtains to see how soundly she slept.

"Tired to death with her long journey, poor thing," they said, softly closing her curtains again.

"Yes, young ladies!" said Sister Agnes, severely, "Miss L'Oiseau is an example to you! You don't see *her* starting up out of her bed at this unholy hour of the night, to assist in raising a confusion! And I hope that in future you will profit by her example! And now, young ladies, that you have proved for yourselves that there is nothing in this dormitory, more sinful and dangerous than your own follies, I hope that you will go quietly to bed, and stay there. And as for *you*, Sister Rose, I shall remember to do to-morrow as I said!"

And, frowning and angry, Sister Agnes retired to her couch.

And, laughing unmercifully at Sister Rose and her graphic dream, the girls retired to theirs.

And sighing and weeping, and praying forgiveness of the Virgin, for having permitted Satan to deceive her with a sinful dream—for such she now felt convinced it must have been—Sister Rose lay down upon hers.

And shaking her fist threateningly at the sour sister, Jacquelina peeped out from her curtains. The wicked fairy had not half finished her frolic yet—the best part of it was to come. She had to wait a long time before everything was quiet—the girls *would* peep out and whisper to their nearest neighbors, who would reply again. And Sister Rose sighed and sobbed softly on her pillow. And Sister Agnes turned and tossed, and grunted and groaned, and "oh! dear me"-ed worse than before.

The clock struck twelve before all was again in repose. And still Jacquelina waited nearly half an hour, to be certain that no one awoke and watched. But at length she was convinced that they were all asleep, and all the more soundly for having been once disturbed.

Then the elf once more arose, dropped the wrapper and took off the night-cap, arranged her yellow curls as before, and set the jaunty middy's cap aside upon them—and coming out from her concealment, stepped softly up to the left hand corner bed, occupied by Sister Agnes. Her bed was uncurtained, like that of Sister Rose; but here all resemblance ceased.

This was quite a different picture. Sister Agnes lay stretched out beneath her coverlet, with her head straight upon the pillow, as rigidly as if she were an effigy carved in marble, or a corpse laid out for burial—with both hands clasped upon her hard chest, and grasping the crucifix with a grim grip, as if she had a grudge against the blessed emblem, and meant that it should not escape while she slept. Her stern features were sterner still in sleep. Her eye-lids seemed as if they had been shut down and then screwed down; and the hard, thin, wiry, firmly closed lips seemed to be shut up and locked up with a key.

Jacquelina looked and laughed at that rigid figure, at that stern face, and especially at that severe, repellant mouth.

"Steel-springs, and rat traps, and crossed-cut saw teeth!" she exclaimed. "I had as lief march my lips up and kiss the muzzle of a pistol while the fiend held the trigger! However, it would never do for the uniform to show the white feather, even under those circumstances! So here goes! Verjuice, verdigris and vitriol, though, I know it's going to be dreadful!" she said, making a very wry face as at the sight of a very bitter draught; and then gathering resolution to swallow it, she suddenly pounced down, and gave the stern sleeper a rousing salute!

"Ah-r-r-r-r-r—ah! Ah-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-oitch! Ah-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-oitch-aw!" yelled Sister Agnes, jumping out of bed!

No hyena—no screech-owl, ever screamed forth such a horrible yell! No form of English letters could give an idea of the harsh, discordant shrieks that seemed to massacre alike the air and the sense of hearing! Every girl sprang out of her bed, shaking in the last extremity of terror at those awful shrieks. Sister Rose was among them, white as her night-robe, clasping her hands and pattering her *ave*. Jacquelina had run away at the first alarm, and taken shelter in her curtains.

"Murder! murder! murder!" continued to shriek Sister Agnes, like one demented.

"What is the matter? Oh! St. Mary, what is the matter?" cried the girls, wringing their hands, in the last agony of terror.

But as Sister Agnes only ran about with wild eyes, and mouth agape, giving forth those ear-splitting shrieks—they clapped their hands to their bruised and wounded ear-drums, and followed her example, running about and screaming with all their might, until soon was heard the sound of many feet, rushing in crowds along all the passages towards the door of this dormitory. All the nuns, all the teachers, all the pupils, were roused up and pouring thither, while the alarm bell of the convent was ringing as if gone mad! The crowd was at the door, the girls ceased their shrieking, and ran and unlocked it. And in pushed the whole convent, with the Mother Abbess at its head. At *her* coming the whole confusion and distracting noise abated.

"What is the matter?" inquired the Abbess.

And—"Oh! what is the matter? Oh! what on earth is the matter?" breathlessly inquired all the nuns, novices and pupils.

"Silence, Sisters! silence, children! Leave the investigation to me," commanded the Mother, of her followers. Then turning to the crowd of frightened girls, she asked, "Has anything really happened? Tell me the occasion of this outcry. What is it?"

"Oh! we don't know! we don't know! But we think there is—a—man in the dormitory!"

"A man in the room! Holy St. Mary!" exclaimed all the profoundly shocked nuns, novices, and pupils.

"A man in the room—impossible!" said the Abbess, while the girls crowded around her, all talking at once, and saying,

"We were all asleep, and Sister Agnes screamed out! It was Sister Agnes!"

"Silence, young ladies, and let Sister Agnes come forward and speak for herself. This is really very irregular! Sister Agnes, please to explain the cause of this false alarm—for such I must believe it, since it is absolutely impossible that a man should be here."

Sister Agnes came forward, turning up the whites of her eyes, and crossing herself—and amid many groans and sighs, told the shocking story of a handsome young officer, in uniform, who was hidden somewhere in the room, and had come to her bedside and kissed her in her sleep!

Among the girls who listened to this exciting explanation, was the "culprit fay," herself, who stood there with her flowing night-dress effectually concealing the suit of uniform worn beneath it, and with the middy's tasseled cap also hidden under it.

The Lady Abbess listened to the story with a very grave face. She was a fair and comely woman of thirty, full fifteen years younger than Sister Agnes, notwithstanding she held, as she deserved to hold, the superior rank. She heard the whole tale to its close, deferring all comment for the present. Then she calmly ordered that the room should be thoroughly searched. And the girls started on the enterprise—

> "Away they ran and the hunt began,
> Each corner to search, each nook to scan,
> The highest, the lowest, the murkiest spot,
> They searched for the culprit, and found him not."

Of course not! Though the room was thoroughly "sifted," no vestige of an intruder could be found. They hunted everywhere—they looked under every bed, within every set of curtains, shook all the pillows, turned up all the mattrasses, examined the shrine of the Virgin, hunted every nook and cranny. Some of the girls, in their zeal, turned their boots upside down and unrolled and shook their stockings—but no hidden enemy dropped out; some, in absence of mind, opened and whirled the leaves of their mass books, but found the *pictures* of men only. In short, so thorough was the search, that if a pin had been missing, it must have been found! They searched everywhere, except (as usual) the right place, (Jacquelina's unsuspected person,) and no sign of the enemy could be seen. It was no use—there was no man there! The alarm was a false one, that was clear. And got up by Sister Agnes, who vowed and protested in vain. Nobody believed her. The girls laughed at her, and the Mother Abbess looked very grave.

"I am very much mortified, Sister Agnes," she said, "to be under the painful necessity of rebuking you here, in the presence of these young ladies, your youthful charge, whom your irreproachable conduct *should* rather teach to respect you! It is humiliating to see a woman of your grave and sober years and sacred calling, the subject of such vain and foolish dreams and visions, as must totally unfit you for the post of chief guardian to these young creatures. You will therefore be pleased to consider yourself displaced, and to leave the dormitory this night. I will assign you a cell before I sleep. Sister Serena, you will take Sister Agnes's vacated place."

And thus having administered justice, the Lady Abbess marshaled her followers, and withdrew from the dormitory, the crest-fallen Sister Agnes going after them; and Sister Serena remaining in her stead,

The young girls, exhausted by so much excitement, sought their pillows, and soon fell asleep. And Jacquelina whispered in confidence to *her* pillow, "So much for the *first* day!"

CHAPTER XIX.

DOCTOR GRIMSHAW.

> "There's a cold bearing,
> And grave, severe aspect about the man,
> As make our spirits pay him such respect,
> As though he dwelt 'neath age's silvery pent-house,
> Despite his years."—*Fanny Kemble.*

The morning came, and Jacquelina was puzzled to know where to conceal her contraband uniform.

The moment was imminent. The girls were all rising and going into the hall connected with the dormitory, where, ranged up and down the sides of the walls, were rows of wash-stands, each numbered with the number of the owner.

Jacquelina rolled up the suit in the smallest possible compass, and put it under the mattrass, hoping that it might remain hidden until she could devise some other hiding place for it. She knew it would never do to put it in her trunk, where it would be certain of being found, when Sister Rose should unpack it. So she was forced to leave it for the present where it was, hoping the best.

And she went into the hall, or bathing, or dressing-room, whichever it might be called, and had a wash-stand pointed out for her future use. Then Sister Rose went to her trunk and gave her out her soaps, brushes, combs, napkins, etc.

The girls were not tempted to linger over their toilets, for *there were no looking-glasses* in the apartment, not the smallest apology for one—the nuns interdicted them as savoring of the vanities of the world.

So the young ladies soon completed their hasty toilets, and were marched down into the chapel for matins. And when this was over they were marched in the same order to the refectory for breakfast.

And all the while Jacquelina's thoughts were running upon the awful suit of uniform, that dead body hidden under her mattrass!—her emotions being divided between curiosity, anxiety, and mirth.

She had not long to wait, for just as the pupils had risen from the table, and were marching out of the refrectory, one of the lay-sisters came up and quietly singling out Jacquelina, informed her that the Mother Superior desired her presence in the dormitory.

Jacquelina was one of those creatures, who, unless she had some great sin upon her conscience, would have jested on the scaffold! And as she followed the lay-sister, all sensations of anxiety gave way to the thrilling anticipation of fun to come in the looks of the horrified Mother Abbess and her nuns.

But Jacko was destined to be a little disappointed.

The lay-sister attended her to the door of the dormitory, and left her She went in. There was no one there but the Abbess and Sister Rose—the uniform was nowhere in sight.

"Shut the door and lock it, Miss L'Oiseau," said the Abbess, in a grave voice.

Jacquelina did as she was bidden, saying to herself,

"I wonder if they are going to bring me before a secret chapter, and have me inhumed alive for my frolic?" as she approached them, half laughing.

The Abbess and Rose were standing near her bed. There also she saw a packet, neatly done up and pinned in a clean napkin, which she felt sure must contain the uniform.

"Miss L'Oiseau," commenced the elder lady, speaking in a grave, sad voice, "I need not tell you that the cause of the alarm last night has been discovered. For your own sake, as well as for the sake of our convent, and the young creatures it shelters, I thank the saints that no one is in the secret of your fault except myself and Sister Rose, in whose discretion I have the utmost confidence. But after this indelicate joke, (to use no harsher term,) I must separate you from the young ladies, who should have been your companions. Until I hear from your friends, to whom I am about to write, a full account of this matter, you will share my apartment, and be under my personal charge. Sister Rose, conduct Miss L'Oiseau thither.

Jacquelina's face, for the very first time in her life, blazed with an overwhelming sense of humiliation. She had never looked on her frolic in so severe a light—she had never considered its impropriety—indeed she had never considered *at all*—she had acted from impulse. And now that she was made to feel and see a certain indelicacy in her practical joke, her face burned with blushes, and her girlish shame was mingled with indignation against those who had made her feel it. We know that she was very perverse. Smiling and nodding her head at the dignified Lady Superior, she said that she was content—that in the privacy of her room she should find ample time to devise some new entertainment for herself, and that she was as fertile in resources as any Jesuit among them! And so saying she followed Sister Rose.

The abbess wrote that day, and in the course of a day or two came an answer from Commodore Waugh, enclosing a letter to his niece. His letter to the Abbess explained something of Jacquelina's naturally elfish nature assuring her that it was for the cure of this very fault that he had placed her under the charge of the pious sisterhood; begging her not to consider her fault too severely—saying that what, in a model young lady of society, might be deemed a shocking impropriety, was, in his wild little Jacko, a mere venial error, entreating her to accept the apology and atonement that he should command his niece to make; and to try her a little longer.

The letter to Jacquelina was quite another matter—it was short—*not* sweet, but crusty and characteristic. I apologise for the necessity of introducing it.

BENEDICT, Oct. 15th, 1821.

You Little Demon!—If you don't go down on your knees and beg sister What's-her-name's pardon, and put yourself right with Mother Thingamy, I'll come and give you the confoundedest keel-hauling that ever you had! I'll be shot if I don't! NICHOLAS WAUGH.

This edifying admonition restored Jacquelina to herself, by putting to flight all her new feelings of maiden propriety, and bringing back by association, all her love of fun, frolic and deviltry. Laughing immoderately she seized her pen and wrote as follows:

CONVENT OF ST. SERENA, Oct. 16th, 182—.

Dear Uncle Nick:—Haven't the least intention to go on my knees to any being under God—wouldn't do it to save myself from death or my soul from purgatory! Haven't the least idea either who you mean by "Sister What's-her name," or "Mother Thingamy"—nor what manner of punishment "the confoundedest keel-hauling" may be. But I know *one* thing—I'm fuller of fun than—than Grim' is of fanaticism! And if you don't come in two days from this and bring me home, I'll——— leave you to imagine what I'll do next!

Your dutiful niece,

JACQUELINA

This note was sealed and dispatched. And what do you think was the result of it? Why that in about another day and a half, Commodore Waugh came in a state of mind between a panic and a fury, and took his exemplary niece home.

The journey was performed on the part of the Commodore in unmitigated sulkiness. Only once had he condescended to address Jacquelina, and that was only to inform her that he was tired of the responsibility of taking care of her—that it was necessary he should secure her from future harm, and that as soon as they should arrive at home, she should forthwith be married to Grim'—that is, if Grim' would have such an unworthy piece of goods as herself.

"He'd better *not*," laughed Jacquelina. "I'd be the death of him in a twelvemonth."

Little did the fairy dream she had uttered a prophecy!

The Commodore condescended to make no comment on her words, and the journey proceeded in silence.

They reached home at the close of the second day.

"What did I tell you, Mimmy?" exclaimed Jacquelina, throwing herself into her mother's arms. Didn't I say I'd be home in a week?—and here I am!"

"Oh! Jacquelina! you will ruin us both! you will break my heart!" cried Mrs. L'Oiseau, repelling her caresses and pushing her away. Not that she was shocked and angered by Jacquelina's frolics, as that she was *afraid*, poor piteous creature, to show her child any affection in the Commodore's presence. Mary L'Oiseau, in her humble home at Old Fields, had possessed some self-respect, if little self reliance, but the promising change in her prospects — the domination of Commodore Waugh, and the hopes and fears concerning the inheritance of Luckenough, had been sufficient to disturb the whole free action of her soul, and make her the shrinking, cringing, timorous creature that we find her now. She was afraid to be kind to her daughter lest she should offend the Commodore. She was not afraid, by submitting to the Commodore, to offend God. For much as she dreaded the *dies irea*, yet when the fear of God and the fear of man contended in her bosom, the *nearest* dread, the fear of *man*—prevailed. So she kept her daughter at a cold distance. Mrs. Waugh *only* dared to be kind to Jacquelina.

The Commodore was amusing himself by making his family as uncomfortable and anxious as he possibly could under the circumstances.

Their apartments at the village hotel were extremely limited—consisting only of a small parlor and two tiny bed-rooms, one occupied by himself and Henrietta, and the other by Mary L'Oiseau and Jacquelina—the whole suite, you perceive, scarcely big enough for the Commodore to "blow out" and storm in. So for hours after breakfast he would sit in the big arm chair in the parlor, puffing great volumes of smoke from his tobacco-pipe, and filling all the rooms and scenting all the window-curtains, bed-draperies and wearing apparel with the stifling vapor, till between smoke and fear, Mary L'Oiseau was always ill.

And bad as that was, it was not the worst—*that* only inflicted discomfort; another practice gave the greatest uneasiness—the Commodore would spend his afternoons and nights playing cards and losing money in the bar-room.

How long this would have lasted, or how far it might have progressed, it is impossible to tell; had not "Locust Hill," the place of Mr. Hughes, deceased, been advertised for rent. And as Luckenough was far enough from completion, and as the Commodore himself was smothering for want of space, he rented it at once, sent to Baltimore for furniture, which he said would do to help to refurnish Luckenough. As soon as it arrived he went once more to housekeeping.

"Locust Hill" was a moderate sized country house, situated on a gentle elevation, just outside of the village, and surrounded by a grove of the trees from which it was named. More servants were sent for from the quarters at Luckenough, and here the family found themselves, as to external surroundings, tolerably comfortable in body, if bodily comfort could coexist with such anxiety of mind as they were called upon to endure.

For, oh! the Commodore continued his visits to the village hotel, where he would frequently play until he lost a large sum of money, and then he would come home in the most ungovernable rage with the whole family—swearing that *they* were the most extravagant set of people that had ever ruined a man or brought themselves to beggary—that he would not be trampled on by them any longer—that Henrietta should be cut down to one quarter of her present outlay for household provisions, and that that little devil should be married to Grim', or should tramp with her fool of a mother forthwith! And that was all poor Mary got for her submission. Such threats regularly sent her to bed with a sick headache. And he swore that in his own house *he* was "supreme ruler," and meant that they should know it, too! And, indeed, with the sums of money he was losing at the gaming-table, and the sums he was expending in the rebuilding of Luckenough, Henrietta became so alarmed, that, with the piteous ineffectual manner of women under such circumstances, she began first to economise in her personal comforts — saving pennies while he was wasting pounds. Among other things — whereas she had been accustomed to have two or three seamstresses in the house twice a year, to make up the clothing for the plantation negroes—now she and Mary L'Oiseau undertook, with the help of the maid Maria, to do the whole work, and night after night they might be seen gathered around the table, sewing diligently by the light of two home-dipped tallow candles.

Now what do you think the Commodore actually did upon one night? Coming home from the village, after having lost more money than usual, he seized one of these candles, and turned it down into its socket, exclaiming,

"I'll be shot if retrenchment mustn't commence *somewhere!*"

And the building up of Luckenough! The architect and his subordinates had a time of it! For it was the first time that the Commodore had ever had the importance and excitement and enjoyment of a builder—and every morning he rode over to Luckenough, and passed the forenoon in "dragooning" the contractor, and driving the workmen, making them pull down this, and alter that, and put up the other, in open defiance of all rules of building, until the men were nearly driven to their wits' ends, and the time and cost of completing the house was extended indefinitely.

Indeed *all*—family, dependants, and hired assistants, were so thoroughly worn out with the Commodore, that his best friends in their hearts prayed for the coming of the fogs and rains of November, that should literally "lay him up by the legs" in his own room, and confine his domination within limited bounds.

At last, towards the latter end of November, their prayers seemed answered, and the Commodore, swathed in flannels, and wrapped in blankets, reclined in his great easy-chair, with his leg laid out upon pillows on another.

And from the neighborhood of this chair, Henrietta sedulously kept everything that could be used as a missile, even his crutch. His meals used to be served on a little stand beside his chair—but one day he threw a fork at poor Maria, wounding her face, and narrowly missing destroying her eye. And after that, Henrietta cut his victuals up into small mouthfuls, and sent him up a teaspoon to eat with.

You may imagine the furious storm that arose then, and how the Commodore hurled plate, bowl and pitcher all through the window-glass into the yard.

But Henrietta told him it was of no use, that though every member of the family, from herself down to the least servant, should serve him faithfully, yet she could not have people, especially poor, helpless maid-servants, killed, crippled, or blinded in her house; that she should certainly send him no more knives and forks, and if he threw another china plate through the window sash, she should send him up his food on a large cabbage leaf, and his drink in a gourd. If he would act like a madman he must be treated as such—people were not to be exposed to wanton injury, nor property to wanton destruction.

A notable blessing was the result, for the Commodore swore a furious oath, by all the demons, that not one of the family should enter his room again during his illness, that he would be nursed only by Grim', and waited on only by Festus ("Stupe").

This new law was immediately executed. Grim' was summoned and installed as nurse, and Festus brought from Luckenough and established as waiter, to the inexpressible relief of the sorely fatigued and harassed family.

And all went on smoothly enough for a while, until one day, when Grim' was dressing the swollen limb, Festus, with a basin of hot water, approached trembling, as he always did when he drew near his dangerous and uncertain master.

"Drop that basin on my leg, you little rascal, you!" vociferated the Commodore, seeing how shakingly he held it.

When forthwith Festus, the literal interpretist, dropped the basin upon the leg, as he was bid.

A horrible yell burst from the Commodore, who, with one galvanic bound, overset Grim', and seized Festus by the ears, and dragging him up within the bear hug of one arm, pummeled him with the other until the boy was black and blue, and the Commodore himself exhausted.

This brought on a severe crisis of his disease. He had to be put to bed, the doctor had to be summoned, and a long and serious fit of illness ensued. Mrs. Waugh, of course, was immediately reinstated.

Dr. Grimshaw, at the Commodore's invitation, became an inmate of the house, which was so convenient to the village where his daily duties called him.

Whenever the Commodore was sufficiently free from pain and fever, Mrs. Waugh and Mary L'Oiseau were sent from the room, and Grim' was summoned. And long consultations were held by the two conspirators in the sick room.

The result was, that Dr. Grimshaw became the daily persecutor of Jacquelina.

But the beautiful elf mocked and derided him! turned him into all sorts of ridicule! laughed him to scorn!

And the more she charmed and fascinated him by her laughter and her sparkling wit—leveled at himself though it was—the more impassioned he became; declaring that her girlish scorn was but the effervescing bead upon the champagne—showing the excellency of the wine.

And the more earnest he became, the more unmercifully she jibed and jeered at him—the more immoderately she laughed.

Until one day when, as he vowed in his singularly sweet tones that he loved her to distraction, she ordered him to go down on both his knees and tell her so; and then, and not *till* then, she would give him an answer; for how dared he make a declaration of love to her from any other position? And when the lost, infatuated man actually obeyed her laughing behest, and dropped upon his knees at her feet, she fell back in her chair, and laughed herself nearly into convulsions. The Professor began to feel humilitated and indignant, and once or twice made a start to rise; but, between her peals of laughter, Jacquelina raised her finger and told him no! that he was to stay *there*, and wait for her answer. And there she kept him until she became tired of the fun; then, recovering from the last paroxysm of her laughter, she said,

"Doctor Grimshaw, not to keep you in suspense, I never intend to be married at all! I scorn the idea! And, least of all men, would I have *you!* for, dearest Ghoul, not to flatter you, I had as lief wed Old Time, with his scythe, or Death, with his skull and cross-bones!"

His teeth closed with a snap—he started up with a spring, and darting upon her a look of mingled longing and hatred, he hissed,

"Very well! we shall see that!"

"Why, what does the Fright mean?" said Jacquelina, arching her eyebrows and pursing her lips; "are threats and ill-temper the way to win a lady's love?"

But Grim' had gone—gone to answer a summons from the Commodore, sent an hour before.

Now, Doctor Grimshaw was no fright, though by no means so handsome as the partial eyes of the Commodore found him.

His appearance was singular and somewhat repellant. He was extremely tall and thin, with rounded, stooping shoulders, like those of the Commodore himself. He chose always to be clothed in a tight suit of solemn black—a style of dress that was characteristic of the man, and which exaggerated the tall. thin, spectral look of his figure, and the pale, livid hue of his complexion. He had black hair and eyes, and eyebrows that nearly met at the narrow, sunken root of his long nose; his cheeks were hollow, and his chin projecting, and his teeth had a habit of catching with a snap, when anything suddenly enraged him.

One looked at him with a mingled feeling of fear, dislike, and pity—as if he were very little more responsible for the evil and danger that might be in him, than the serpent is for its fangs and venom; as if his faults were those of original sin and hereditary growth, rather than of his own willful importation and cultivation.

Ignatius Loyola Grimshaw was a foreigner by birth; he had come over with the Commodore when the latter returned to his native country, and the influence of the old man had obtained him his present position and standing in the county.

Some surprise was expressed, and some conjectures made, concerning the unusual interest and great affection the rugged old soldier bore to his protege; but, as time passed, and the walk of Doctor Grimshaw was exemplary to a degree, these suspicions and conjectures gradually died out, and the partiality of the old man for the young one was set down as one of his unaccountable *whims.* And so Doctor Grimshaw grew in favor with man, if not with Him who seeth not as man seeth.

Such was the pet of Commodore Waugh and the lover of Jacquelina—such the man whose love she made the object of her merry scorn.

Poor Sans Souci! her laughing days were almost over! The Commodore, like the frozen adder of the fable, was "coming round" again, under the tender care of Henrietta and Mary L'Oiseau, and was preparing to sting at least one of the hands that had nursed him back to life, namely, "poor, misfortu

Miss Mary," as Jenny called her—Jenny, who now freely declared that she was very sorry she had ever "'vised her to go to Old Nick." The Commodore swore that *he* knew how "to make Jacquelina knuckle under," and that he meant to do it, just as soon as he was able to use his limbs.

It was now the middle of December. The snow was on the ground, and the weather was bitterly cold. One morning, during a snow-storm that kept all the family and all the female servants confined within doors, the Commodore seized the occasion to send for Jacquelina to his room.

She came in laughing at some merry jest that she had left behind.

But the Commodore sternly motioned her to a seat, which she took, and fearlessly waited for him to speak.

He told her roundly that he had come to the fixed and unalterable determination to have her married to Grimshaw, at Christmas—and that she might go and prepare herself for an honor that he considered far above her merits.

"So much above my merits," said the elf, nodding her saucy head at him, "that I haven't the least idea of accepting it."

"And by all the fiends in flames! Miss, you SHALL accept it! I'll be shot to death if I'll be fooled by you, or trampled on by your mother any longer?"

"Trampled on by my mother! Holy saints!" laughed Jacquelina, "the idea of my poor, timorous Mimmy trampling on anybody, much less you!"

"You laugh, you limb you! I'll make you laugh on the wrong side of your mouth before *I've* done with you!"

"Which *is* the wrong side, uncle?"

"Silence, Minx, before I box your ears!"

"I vow, if you were to do that, uncle, I'd seize your sick leg and give it *such* a loving squeeze, as would put you to bed for another month!"

"I believe you would, you little incarnate demon! But listen here! I do not mean to be foiled this time! For, by all the saints in heaven, and all the fiends in—"

"H-sh-sh-sh! you mustn't speak of *your future home* to ears polite!"

"I wont be balked, you little vixen you. I'll finish what I was a-going to say—that is, that by Satan you shall be married to Grim', at the coming Christmas!"

"It would certainly be only by *that agency*, if I were—for surely no such marriage as *that* could be made in heaven. Look you here, uncle," she said, half laughing, though wholly in earnest; "I would not marry Doctor Grimshaw for Luckenough, and all that it will contain—no, not to save *his* life, nor my *own*, nor *yours*, uncle! I would sooner see Luckenough burned again to the ground, and the soil ploughed up and sown with salt, to make it a sterile desert forever. I would sooner see Doctor Grimshaw hung, and you in your grave, and myself in my coffin—than doomed to the living tomb of a marriage with Doctor Grimshaw!"

"Then, by heaven! I'll turn you out of doors."

"No you wont, by 'heaven,' uncle. You will do it by the *other agency* you mentioned!" laughed Jacquelina.

"I'll give you until Christmas, to come to your senses—but if upon Christmas eve you are not prepared to marry Doctor Grimshaw, I'll thrust you into the street to starve!"

"You *can* do that! but, praise be to the Lord! you *can't* make me marry Doctor Grimshaw! So you do as you please, uncle! and do it as *soon* as you please! I would rather beg my bread, free and merry, than be the wife of that man! No earthly power can or shall compel me to marry Doctor Grimshaw! Fiddle-de-dee! The very idea of such a thing!" she exclaimed, leaving her earnestness, and by a sudden transition, breaking into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

In a rage, her uncle drove her from the room, and she ran off to finish her fit of laughing in her own apartment.

Poor Sans Souci! poor Lapwing! how little she really knew of those "earthly powers," she so fearlessly defied.

CHAPTER XX.

CLIPPING A BIRD'S WINGS.

"And the maiden's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown gray—
For such things must begin some day!
In a day or two she was well again.
As who should say—'You labor in vain!
This is all a jest against God, who meant
I should ever be, as I am, content
And glad in his sight; therefore glad I will be.'
So smiling as at first went she."—*Browning.*

It is written, "Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk." Yet Commodore Waugh did not hesitate to do this thing.

The only way by which he could control Jacquelina, was through her affection for her mother—for filial love was now the sole human and vulnerable part of the fairy's nature, and he did not shrink from attacking that point.

Jacquelina had continued to laugh at his threats, and to defy his fury. And he felt at last that she would, in her own person, brave any fate, rather than have an unwelcome marriage forced upon her. But her mother! he meant to make her tremble for the fate of her mother!

For a year past, that poor woman's health, unnoticed by all, except good Henrietta, had been sinking. A close room, an infected atmosphere, a storm raised by the Commodore, a change in the weather, a little indiscretion in diet, anything of the kind was enough to make her ill for a day or a week, as it happened. There was also the little hacking cough, and the afternoon flush in the cheeks, and light in the eyes, and elevation of the animal spirits, that could scarcely as yet be recognized as hectic fever. Jacquelina was too young and inexperienced, and all the rest of the family too careless to notice the insidious approach of death—all, except Henrietta, who watched the victim with anxiety, frequently warning her in something like this manner, "Mary, you must attend to that cough," or, "Mary, child, don't sit in that draught of cold air," or, "It is time you had on your flannel, Mary."

This watchfulness and these admonitions had increased so much of late, that they had attracted Jacquelina's attention, and directed it to her mother—and the young girl noticed for the first time that she was very thin, and that her voice was weak, and her footsteps faint and slow—yet every day, after dinner, when the invalid had such a fine color, and such a flow of spirits, Jacquelina was reassured. One day, however, when Mrs. Waugh had been more than usually anxious in her thoughtfulness for the poor little woman, Jacquelina followed her aunt to her room, and asked, gravely,

"Aunty! is there anything the matter with my Mimmy?"

The tears swam in Henrietta's eyes as she looked at the girl.

"Your mother has not been well for a long time, my dear. She is neither well nor happy—therefore you must be very attentive to her, Lapwing, and very careful not to wound or disturb her in any way by your frolics, or you may some day greatly repent it."

"Aunty! you don't mean to say that Mimmy is *seriously* ill?"

"Yes, my dear, she is seriously out of health! but we can do much to help her—especially *you* can, Lapwing. You are her only child, and her greatest comfort, and you must do all that you can to serve her."

"I am sure I will, aunty! There is nothing in the world I would not do for my Mimmy! But you don't, you don't think there is any *danger*, do you?" she asked, as her eyes overflowed with tears.

"Oh, no, my dear! No immediate danger. We must be very careful of her—that is all!"

But the young girl was not satisfied—a weight had fallen upon her heart—she had learned to ponder, to watch, to hope, and to fear, for one she loved "whom death might touch."

From that day forth, she watched her mother's changing face with tenderness and anxiety, waiting on her, anticipating her wishes, saving her steps and labor, shielding her from harm, and from her uncle's frequent harshness, in a way that no one would have believed of the elf.

In the night she often left her bed to creep on tiptoe to her mother's room, to ascertain if she slept soundly, and often finding her awake and feverish, she would slip down stairs, and go to the distant spring to get a pitcher of fresh water to lave her burning head, and slake her burning thirst. These night fevers would go off towards morning in a profuse perspiration, and Mary L'Oiseau would rise, though weak, and go about the house as usual.

But the clouds were fast gathering over poor Sans Souci's heavens.

The Commodore had quite recovered for the time being, and he began to urge the marriage of his niece with his favorite. Doctor Grimshaw's importunities were also becoming very tiresome. They were no longer a *jest.* She could no longer divert herself with them. She felt them as a real persecution, and expressed herself accordingly. To Grim' she said,

"Once I used to laugh at you. But now I do hate you more than anything in the universe! And I wish—I *do* wish that you were in Heaven! for I do detest the very sight of you—there!"

And to the Commodore's furious threats she would answer,

"Uncle, the time has passed by centuries ago for forcing girls into wedlock, thanks be to Christianity and civilization. You can't force me to have Grim', and you had as well give up the wicked purpose," or words to that effect.

One day when she had said something of the sort, the Commodore answered cruelly,

"Very well, Miss! *I* force no one, please to understand! But I afford my protection and support only upon certain conditions, and withdraw them when those conditions are not fulfilled! Neither you nor your mother had any legal claim upon me. *I* was not in any way bound to feed and clothe and house you for so many years. I did it with the tacit understanding that you were to marry to please *me*, and all your life you have understood, as well as any of us, that you were to wed Doctor Grimshaw."

"If such an understanding existed, it was without my consent, and was originated in my infancy, and I do not feel and I will not *be* in the least degree bound by it! For the expense of my support and education, uncle! I am truly sorry that you risked it upon the hazardous chance of my liking or disliking the man of your choice! But as I had no hand in your venture, I do not feel the least responsible for your losses. Yours is the fate of a gambler in human hearts who has staked and lost—that is the worst!"

"And by all the fiends in fire, Minion! you shall find that it is *not* the worst. *I* know how to make you knuckle under, and I shall do it!" exclaimed the Commodore in a rage, as he rose up and strode off towards the room occupied by Mary L'Oiseau. Without the ceremony of knocking, he burst the door open with one blow of his foot, and entered where the poor, feverish, frightened creature was lying down to take a nap. Throwing himself into a chair by her bedside, he commenced a furious attack upon the trembling invalid. He recounted, with much exaggeration, the scene that had just transpired between himself and Jacquelina—repeated with additions her undutiful words, bitterly reproached Mary for encouraging and fostering that rebellious and refractory temper in her daughter, warned her to bring the headstrong girl to a sense of her position and duty, or to prepare to leave his roof; for he swore he "wouldn't be hectored over and trodden upon by her nor her daughter any longer!" And so having overwhelmed the timid, nervous woman with undeserved reproaches and threats, he arose and left the room.

And can any one be surprised that her illness was increased, and her fever arose, and her senses wandered all night? When her mother was ill, Jacquelina could not sleep. Now she sat by her bedside sponging her hot hands, and keeping ice to her head, and giving drink to slake her burning thirst, and listening, alas! to her sad and rambling talk about their being turned adrift in the world to starve to death, or to perish in the snow! —calling on her daughter to save them both by yielding to her uncle's will! And Jacquelina heard and understood, and wept and sighed—a new experience to the poor girl, who was

> "Not used to tears at night
> Instead of slumber!"

All through the night she nursed her with unremitting care. And in the morning, when the fever waned, and the patient was wakeful, though exhausted, she left her only to bring the refreshing cup of tea and plate of toast, prepared by her own hands.

But when she brought it to the bedside, the pale invalid waved it away. She felt as if she could not eat. Fear had clutched her heart, and would not relax its hold.

"I want to talk to you, Jacquelina," she said.

"Eat and drink first, Mimmy, and then you and I will have such another good talk!" said Jacquelina, coaxingly.

"I can't! Oh! I can't swallow a mouthful, I am choking now!"

"Oh! that is nothing but the hysterics, Mimmy! 'high-strikes,' as Jenny calls them! I feel like I should have them myself sometimes! Come! cheer up, Mimmy! Your fever is off, and your head is cool! Come, take this consoling cup of tea and bit of toast, and you will feel so much stronger and cheerfuler."

"Tea! Oh! everything I eat and drink in this unhappy house is bitter—the bitter cup and bitter bread of dependance!"

"Put more sugar into it then, Mimmy, and sweeten it! Come! Things are not yet desperate! Cheer up!"

"What do you mean, my love? Have you consented to be married to Professor Grimshaw!"

"No! St. Mary! Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Jacquelina, shuddering for the first time.

"Now, *why* 'Heaven forbid?' Oh! my child, why are you so perverse? Why wont you take him, since your uncle has set his heart upon the match?"

"Oh, mother?"

"I know you are very young to be married—too young! far too young! Only sixteen, gracious heaven! But then you know we have no alternative but that, or starvation; and it is not as if you were to be married to a youth of your own age—this gentleman is of grave years and character, which makes a great difference."

"I should think it did."

"What makes you shiver and shake so, my dear? Are you cold, or nervous? Poor child, you got no sleep last night. Do *you* drink that cup of tea, my dear. You need it more than I do.".

"No, no."

"Why, what is the matter with my fairy?"

"Oh, mother, mother, don't take sides against me! don't! or you will drive me to my ruin. Who will take a child's part, if her mother don't. I love you best of all the world, mother. Do not take sides against me! take my part! help me to be true! to be true."

"True to whom, Jacquelina? What are you talking about?"

"True to this *heart*—to this *heart*, mother! to all that is honest and good in my nature."

"I don't understand you at all."

"Oh, mother, the thought of marrying anybody is unwelcome to me, now; and the idea of being married to Grim' is abhorrent; is like that of being sold to a master that I hate, or sent to prison for life; it is full of terror and despair. Oh! oh!—"

"Don't talk so wildly, Jacquelina; you make me ill."

"Do I, Mimmy? Oh, I didn't mean to worry you. Bear up, Mimmy; do try to bear up; don't fear; suppose he *does* turn me out. I am but a little girl, and food and clothing are cheap enough in the country, and *any* of our neighbors will take me in just for the fun I'll make them. La! yes, that they will, just as gladly as they will let in the sunshine."

"Oh, child, how little you know of the world. Yes, for a day or two, or a week or two, scarcely longer. And even if *you* could find a home, who would give shelter to your poor, sick mother, for the rest of her life?"

"Mother! uncle would never deny *you* shelter upon my account," exclaimed Jacquelina, growing very pale.

"Indeed he will, my child; he has; he came in here last night, and warned me to pack up and leave the house."

"He will not dare—even *he*, so to outrage humanity and public opinion, and everything he ought to respect."

"My child, he will. He has so set his heart upon making Nace Grimshaw his successor at Luckenough, that if you disappoint him in this darling purpose, there will be no limit to his rage and his revenge. And he will not only send us from his roof, but he will seek to justify himself and further ruin us by blackening our names. Your wildness and eccentricity will be turned against us, and so distorted and misrepresented as to ruin us forever."

"Mother! mother! he is not so wicked as that."

"He is furious in his temper, and violent in his impulses—he will do all that under the influence of disappointment and passion, however he may afterwards repent his injustice. You must not disappoint him, Jacquelina."

"*I* disappoint him? Why, Mimmy, Luckenough does not belong to *me*. And if he wants Grim' to be his successor, *why*, as I have heard aunty ask him, does he not make him his heir?"

"There are reasons, I suspect, my dear, why he *cannot* do so. I think he holds the property by such a tenure, that he cannot alienate it from the *family*. And the only manner in which he can bestow it upon Doctor Grimshaw, will be through his wife, if the doctor should marry some relative."

"That is it, hey? Well! I will not be made a sumpter-mule to carry this rich gift over to Doctor Grimshaw—even if there *is* no other way of conveyance. Mother! what *is* the reason the Professor is such a favorite with uncle?"

"My dear, I don't know, but I have often had my suspicions."

"Of what, Mimmy?"

"Of a very near, though unacknowledged relationship; don't question me any farther upon that particular point, my dear, for I really know nothing whatever about it. Oh, dear." And the invalid groaned and turned over.

"Mother, you are very weak; mother, please to take some tea; let me go get you some hot."

"Tell me, Jacquelina; will you do as the old man wishes you?"

"I will tell you, after you take some refreshments," said Jacquelina.

"Well! go bring me some."

The girl went and brought more hot tea and toast, and waited until her mother had drank the former, and partaken of a morsel of the latter. When, in answer to the eager, inquiring look, she said:

"Mother! if I alone were concerned, I would leave this house this moment, though I should never have another roof over my head. But for *your* sake, mother, I will still fight the battle. I will try to turn uncle from his purpose. I will try to awaken Grim's generosity, if he has any, and get him to withdraw his suit. I will get aunty to use her influence with both of them, and see what can be done. But as for marrying Dr. Grimshaw, mother—I know what I am saying—I would rather *die!*"

"And see *me* die, my child?"

"Oh, mother! it will not be so bad as that."

"Jacquelina, it will. Do you know what is the meaning of these afternoon fevers and night sweats, and this cough?"

"I know it means that you are very much out of health, Mimmy, but I hope you will be well in the spring."

"Jacquelina, it means *death*."

"Oh, no! No, no! No, no! Not so! There's Miss Nancy Skamp has had a cough every winter ever since I knew her, and she is not dead nor likely to die, and you will be well in the spring," said the girl, changing color and faltering in spite of herself.

"I shall never see another spring, my child—"

"Oh, mother! don't! don't say so. You—"

"Hear me out, my dear; I shall never live to see another spring, unless I can have a quiet life, with peace of mind. These symptoms, my child, mean *death*, sooner or later. My life may be protracted for many *years*, if I can live in peace and comfort; but if I must suffer privation, want, and anxiety, I cannot survive many *months*, Jacquelina."

The poor girl was deadly pale; she started up and walked the floor in a distracted manner, crying,

"What shall I do! Oh! what shall I do!"

"It is very plain what you shall do, my child. You must marry Dr. Grimshaw. Come, my dear, be reasonable. If I did not think it best for your happiness and prosperity, I would not urge it. No, not to prevent myself being homeless and starving in my illness. But, Jacquelina, look on both sides of the subject. If you do not marry Dr. Grimshaw, your uncle will disinherit you, and send us both out, houseless wanderers; here is, then, on one side, beggary and a blighted name. On the other, wealth and position. Jacquelina, my child, this is no Arcadian world—whose people can live on sentiment, heroism, love, or, still less, on 'freedom, fun and frolic,' your favorite watch-words. Those who are well housed, well clothed, and well fed, have abundance to be thankful for. They can do without the ideal raptures of love and romance, and the rest of the nonsense that exists nowhere but in the crazed brains of poets and novelists. Food, and clothing, and warmth, and shelter, are the necessaries of life; the rest is but fantastical foolishness; not so much amiss if they can be had in addition to the others, but never to be purchased at their expense. Now, if you will only be a sensible girl, and a dutiful child, and marry Dr. Grimshaw, you will have all these things, and a husband who dotes on you besides. And your uncle will be very good to you when once you have sacrificed your will to his pleasure."

All this time Jacquelina was walking up and down the floor, wringing her hands. Presently she came to her mother's side, and said,

"Mimmy, don't talk any longer dear! There's a bright spot on your cheek now, and your fever will rise again, even this morning. I will see what can be done to bring everybody to reason! I will not believe but that if *I* remain firm and faithful to my heart's integrity, there will be *some* way of escape made between these two alternatives."

But could Sans Souci do this? Had the frolicsome fairy sufficient integral strength and self-balance to resist the powerful influences gathering around her?

The clouds thickened and darkened over her head. The circle of irresistible fate seemed closing about her. And her efforts to dissolve the spell, and throw off the influence, were fitful, flighty, and ineffectual. And what was it that crippled and distracted, and made impotent her resistance? It was her love for her sick, and helpless, and timid mother. Not much reverence had Jacquelina for that mother—not much reverence for anything on earth, had the elf; but a tender, nursing love, without much respect—a love whose character was betrayed in the petting and protecting manner, and the childish names by which the young girl would address her parent. That poor, weak mother was the stumbling block in her path of rectitude. Had she been alone, her elastic spirit would have thrown off all weight, and stepped forth, free and fearless, into God's world of work; and the forest fairy would have become a toiling kitchen "brownie," rather than have bartered her freedom for sloth and wealth. But the choice lay between her own happiness and her mother's ease and comfort! It was, therefore, with something like a wild, amazed despair, that the girl sometimes realized the facts of her position, and contemplated the impending doom. For, battle and strive as the poor thing might, who could doubt the issue? Neither did the Commodore leave her at peace for a single day. She avoided her uncle as much as she possibly could, and defied him when she met him. As thus—when encountering him on the stairs or at the table, he would ask her, "Well, are you making preparations for getting married, or for leaving the house, which?"

"Neither! I wouldn't marry the Ogre to save the world from a general conflagration! and I wont budge a foot out of the house until Mimmy gets well, to save your soul alive! There!"

"Oh! if it comes to *that*, I can put you out!"

"I defy you to do it! You'd get mobbed by your own colored people! not to say the whole county, when they came to know it! You must think I'm a fool!"

"I do think so—but I advise you to be sensible, and prepare for your wedding or your flitting, for the day is fast approaching."

"I don't care if it is! A good many things might happen in a few days! You might have a stroke of apoplexy, you know, which would set everything right at once! For my part, I live in hopes!"

"You do! well, I live in certainties—for on Christmas Eve, at night, you either enter your bridal chamber, or get thrust into the wintry weather—and not you alone, but your mother too!"

"Monstrous sinner! Oh! it serves me just right for crossing the path of fate, and saving you from the flames. I wish to goodness I had let you be burned up—there!"

"Oh! ho! ho! ho!" roared the Commodore, with his hoarse laugh—"but you see you did do it! It was your fate to save me, as it will be your fate, beyond your deserts, to take 'Grim' for your lord and master."

"I'll kill him first!—a horrible old Vampire! Oh! I wish I were a gipsy, or circus rider, or a rope dancer, or anything on earth that is free and merry."

"Yes, I dare say! And it is to prevent your running away with some travelling menagerie, that I intend to make you safe under Grim's control."

"I'll run away *afterwards!* I wont marry him at all, I mean but if I did, I'd run away from him, the ugly old Giraffe!"

"Grim' could restrain you."

"I'd break his heart! I'd drive him raving mad, and make him commit suicide!"

"Grim' will risk that."

"I'll end it all, and drown myself, before I'll marry him!"

"And *I'll* risk *that.*"

And many such conversations as this would ensue between the uncle and the niece. And Sans Souci would always leave him with her spirits all on fire with opposition.

And, going into her mother's room, she would exclaim,

"Mimmy! *Be* a woman! Bear up, Mimmy! Oh, Mimmy! try to get well, and help me to withstand this monstrous wickedness."

But little help did the poor girl get from her feeble mother, who would still receive her pleadings with such words as these

"Oh, Jacquelina! your perverseness will break my heart," or, "oh, you wild, misguided child! you will kill me."

"Mimmy, you know I love you better than all the world."

"I know you *pretend* to love me; but you are so selfish and hard hearted, that you would rather see me *die* here than give up your own wild, foolish will, even when to give it up would be for your own good."

During these interviews, Sans Souci would shed the bitterest tears she had ever shed in her life, and she would retire from them with her spirits depressed, and her powers of resistance much diminished.

She tried and succeeded in winning the cordial sympathy and co-operation of Mrs. Waugh. Henrietta was the only friend and coadjutor she had in the house. Daily and hourly she risked the storm of the Commodore's wrath, by her silent, steady system of opposition to his views. She would constantly intervene as a shield between him and poor Mary, between him and Jacquelina, and between Jacquelina and Doctor Grimshaw. She resolutely expostulated with the Commodore about the crying sin of ruining the whole life's happiness of a poor child—one, especially, who had saved him from a horrible death by fire, at the imminent risk of her own life.

"Ah, but the little vixen! she says she is sorry she did it now! And that wipes out the remembrance of the favor!" chuckled the Commodore.

"And you know very well that that is only Lapwing's wild talk! It is just like the reckless elf, to destroy the whole *effect* of an act of heroism by a little petulance! You *know* that even now, badly as you use her, were your life again in danger, she would risk her own to save yours. You *know* it, Commodore Waugh. You *know* it, yet this is the way in which you would repay her! I don't see *how*, remembering that awful night when she saved you—you can persist in a purpose, that if carried into effect, will utterly crush her glad heart, and break her high spirit forever!"

"*O-h-h-h!*" roared the old man, suddenly bringing down the point of his heavy stick upon the floor, and thrusting forward his huge head; "*o-h-h-h!* what *right* has a female to spirit? She has a great deal too much spirit! She is an impudent minx, and I hope Grim' *will* break her spirit, that is all!"

"I should advise him never to try! no woman worth having can ever be governed except through her affections, or her conscience! And as Jacquelina neither loves nor respects the man you would force upon her, I should dread for him to try the part of a tyrant—he would find the most dangerous rebel that ever tyranny created."

"I mistake Grim' if he don't know how to manage a refractory girl, as long as he has been used to governing rebellious boys!"

"You can talk of your niece in that way! And she saved you from a death by fire! saved you at the imminent hazard of meeting the same horrible fate! saved you, when not a strong, brave man on the plantation would dare the attempt! She, a young, fragile girl, dared to do it, and I firmly believe a *miracle* assisted her! And *this* is the way you repay her!"

"'This is the way I repay her!' Yes, this *is* the way I repay her! and a very good way, too!—none better! What the fiend would you have? I give her a large fortune, and a good husband to take care of it for her, and to keep her out of mischief, and make her behave herself!"

"I assure you, Commodore Waugh, that I shall do all I can to prevent this great wrong. And if it is to go on, I will have no hand whatever in it. I will not make the slightest preparations for it, nor countenance the atrocity by my presence at the mockery of the marriage rites!"

"Then, by all the demons, ma'am, you are quite welcome to keep away! Your room will be just as agreeable as your company!" said the Commodore, brutally.

"And more, I tell you, Commodore Waugh! if you *do* commit the heinous crime of forcing the child into this hated marriage, a curse will follow it!—an awful punishment will fall upon it! a fatal catastrophe will end it! Be warned in time!"

"D—n! ma'am, silence with your croaking! Do you think I'm to be scared from my purpose by the voice of an old raven?"

Mrs. Waugh's next essay was with Doctor Grimshaw himself. She seized the opportunity when he occupied the parlor alone. She went up to him, and saying that she wished to have a few moments of private conversation with him, she sat down by his side, and delicately approached the subject. She then spoke of the general unsuitability of a marriage between himself and her niece.

Doctor Grimshaw interrupted her by politely suggesting that he himself might be considered the best judge of that.

Mrs. Waugh persisted in expressing her doubts upon that very point. She spoke of the glaring disaparity of their respective ages and characters—her merry thoughts. Jacquelina, she said, could never make a proper and suitable companion for the grave and learned Professor Grimshaw.

Doctor Grimshaw smiled, and thanking her for the questionable compliment, begged her to understand that he did not even expect or wish to find in Miss L'Oiseau an *intellectual* companion—that in his library and among his brother professors, he found sufficient of intellectual sympathy—that he rather disliked intellectual women, and never should dream of selecting one for his wife—that in Miss L'Oiseau's delightful beauty and refreshing wit he sought only the necessary relaxation from graver thoughts and studies.

"And she is no more intended for a pedant's toy than a sultan's slave!" exclaimed Henrietta, indignantly. "Dr. Grimshaw, you have been intimate enough with this family, and deep enough in the Commodore's counsels to know exactly how this matter stands. You know Jacquelina's unconquerable repugnance to this union, and you know the motives and influences that have been brought to bear upon the child to compel her to receive you as a suitor. And knowing this, if you are the man of honor that I hope to find you, you will never permit yourself to be forced upon her acceptance!"

"Madam, being sincerely attached to Miss L'Oiseau, and having her uncle's, your husband's, sanction for addressing her, you cannot very severely blame me for seeking to overcome the obstacles of the young lady's prejudices and dislike, and to win her regard."

"Dr. Grimshaw, your specious words deceive *you* no more than they do *myself*. You are perfectly well aware that your suit to Jacquelina is unwelcome and distressing to the last degree—and if you have any *manhood*, not to say humanity, or dignity, or delicacy of character, you will immediately withdraw it."

"Mrs. Waugh's words are severe! and yet I am sorry I cannot oblige her in this particular matter!" answered the Professor, bowing.

"And in that case, I shall be compelled to withdraw my confidence and esteem from Doctor Grimshaw!"

"I shall be extremely grieved and mortified to lose Mrs Waugh's good opinion," said the Professor, rising and bowing ironically; "there is indeed but one thing to console me for the want of it, and that is, the fair hand of her charming niece!"

It was with difficulty Henrietta could abstain from saying,

"In future, when Dr. Grimshaw honors this house with his presence, he will do me a favor by not addressing one word of his conversation to me!"

But she *did* restrain herself, and passed from the room to seek the presence of Mrs. L'Oiseau, in whom her last hope of saving Jacquelina rested.

She found her in her chamber, where, even when not confined by weakness, she chose to remain, to keep out of sight and hearing of that terrible bug-bear, the Commodore.

"Mary," said Mrs. Waugh, seating herself beside her, "I come to you to tell you that you must save your child from this hideous injustice! Only *you* can do it, and you must!"

"Oh, dear! oh, blessed saints! what can I do? I'm sure my uncle frightens me almost to death with his threats?"

"You must not, through any fear of consequences to yourself, permit this great wrong to be done to your child! If you do, mind I tell you it will meet with a terrible retribution. You are her mother, and you can interpose to save her. You can do it with authority. *Only* you can do it! Rouse yourself! Stand by her in her trouble, Mary, and God will sustain you! The very birds of the air and beasts of the field defend their young! be *up* to their level, for Heaven's sake, and defend yours!"

"Defend her from what? Dear me, it seems as if a good match were not such a bad thing. I believe you're all out of your senses, and you want to kill me with your scenes! What can *I* do—poor, feeble, dependent creature that I am!"

"What can you do!" exclaimed Henrietta, indignantly; "you can teach her by your example—by your courage and patience, to brave *any* fate rather than barter the integrity of her soul for ease and wealth! You can take her by the hand and go forth into the wide world if necessary, to seek a home with strangers, or from charity! You can encourage her, protect her, defend her; you can suffer *with* her, and *for* her—as God knows, if she were *my* child, *I* would, rather than see her so bitterly wronged!"

"Oh!" whined the sufferer, "it is easy for you to talk—you, who haven't got it to do. We can all of us be patient or courageous or *anything* by proxy."

"I would I stood in your place! I would do more than I have said! I would die *with* and *for* my child, rather than see her left to so much misery!"

"Oh, do go away! You make me nervous and feverish! It is bad enough to have Uncle Nick's abuse for not *making* her marry Grim', without having yours for not *preventing* her doing it. I am just between two fires. I do believe you mean to drive me crazy, between you!"

Once more upon this day an indignant scathing reply arose to Mrs. Waugh's lips, and they burned to say, "Of all the cowardice and meanness in this world, that which hinders a mother from being just to her daughter certainly is the most loathly! There is no such thing in the brute creation! it is only to be found in lost human nature!" But again she bit her lips in silence, and arose and left the room. She found Jacquelina in the passage, on her way to her mother's room. Mrs. Waugh motioned her in silence to go in. Now Henrietta certainly thought she was entitled to the willful girl's gratitude for the interest she had taken, and the rebuffs she had received in her cause. Judge then of the good woman's surprise when, in the course of the evening, Jacquelina came in and roundly took her to task for lecturing her "Mimmy" into a fever.

"She can't stand it, aunty! And if you waked and watched with her as *I* do every night, you'd know how bad her nights are!"

"Oh! child—" begun Henrietta; but whatever she was about to say was drowned in tears, as she covered her face and wept.

In an instant Jacquelina's arms were around her neck.

"Aunty! aunty! dear, good aunty! don't cry! what are you crying about? Have I hurt your feelings? I never meant to!"

"No! no! little Lapwing! *you* didn't hurt my feelings"

"What are you crying about then, aunty? Don't cry!"

"About the—way—they—treat—you, Lapwing!" sobbed Henrietta.

"*Don't they, though?* Never mind! I'll pay them with compound interest! Now look here, aunty! stop this! if you keep on so, I shall go ramping mad! I know I shall! What do you cry about *me* for? *I* don't cry for myself? Catch me at it! For wont I lead him a life? Instead of breaking my *own* heart about it, I mean to break *his!* I vow to 'Sam,' that I'll drive him frantic, and make him run his head against a wall, and butt his brains out before the honeymoon is over! Oh! *I'll* train him! You shall see fun alive at Locust Hill! So cheer up, aunty! or if you must cry, just cry for poor Grim'! it will be a charity!"

As the decisive day approached, Jacquelina certainly acted like one distraught—now in wild defiance, now in paleness and tears, and anon in fitful mirth, or taunting threats. She rapidly lost flesh and color, and in hysterical laughter accounted for it by saying that she believed in her soul Grim' was a spiritual vampire, who preyed upon her life! She avoided him as much as she could. And if sometimes, when she was about to escape from him, he would seize her wrist and detain her, she would suddenly lose her breath, and turn so pale, that in the fear of her fainting, he would release her. So he got no opportunity to press his claims.

One morning, however—it was about a week before Christmas—she voluntarily sought his presence. She entered the parlor where he sat alone. Excitement had flushed her cheeks with a vivid crimson, and lighted her eyes with sparkling fire—she did not know that her beauty was enhanced a thousand fold—she did not know that never in her life had her presence kindled such a flame in the heart of her lover as it did at that moment. And if he restrained himself from going to meet her, it was the dread lest she should fade away from him, as he had seen her do so often. But she advanced and stood before him.

"Dr. Grimshaw!" she said, "I have come to make a last appeal to you! I have come to beg, to supplicate you, for my sake, for honor, for truth and for mercy's sake, yes! for heaven's sake, to withdraw your pretensions to my poor hand! For, sir, I *do* not and I *can* not like you! I do not say but that you are far too good and wise, and every way too worthy for such a girl as I am—and that you do me the very greatest honor by your preference, but still no one can account for tastes—and, sir, I cannot like you—pray, pardon me! indeed, I cannot help it."

Although her *words* were so humble, her color was still heightened, and her eyes had a threatening defiant sparkle in them, so contradictory, so piquant and fascinating in contrast with the little fragile, graceful, helpless form, that his head was almost turned. It was with difficulty he could keep from snatching the fluttering, half defiant, half frightened, bird-like creature to his bosom. But he contented himself with saying,

"My fairy! we are commanded to love those that hate us; and should you hate me more than ever, I should only continue to love you!"

"Love me at a *distance*, then! and the *greater* the distance, the more grateful I shall be!"

He could no longer quite restrain himself. He seized her hand and drew her towards him, exclaiming, in an eager, breathless, half whisper,

"No! *closer* and *closer* shall my love draw us, beautiful one! until it compasses your hate and unites us forever!"

With a half suppressed cry, she wrung her hand from his grasp, and answered wildly,

"I sought your presence, to entreat you—and to warn you! I have supplicated you, and you have turned a deaf ear to my prayer! Now I warn you! and disregard my warning, if you dare! despise it at your peril! I am going out of my wits, I think! I warn you that I *may* consent to become your wife! I have no persevering resistance in my nature. I cannot hold out forever against those I love. But I warn you, that if ever I consent, it will be under the undue influence of others!"

"Put your consent upon any ground you please, you delightful, you enchanting little creature. We will spare your blushes, charming as they are!" he exclaimed, surprised out of self-control, and seizing both her hands.

Angrily she snatched them from him.

"What have I said? Oh! what have I said? I believe I am going crazy! I tell you, Doctor Grimshaw, that if I ever yield, it will be only to the overwhelming force brought to bear upon me; and even *then* it will be only during a temporary fit of insanity! And I warn you—I warn you, not to *dare* to take me at my word!"

"Will I not? You bewitching little sprite! do you do this to make me love you ten thousand times more than I do?"

Passionately she broke forth in reply—

"You do not believe me! You do not see that I am in terrible earnest! I tell you, Doctor Grimshaw, that were I induced to consent to be your wife, you had better not take advantage of such a consent! It would be the most fatal day's work you ever did for yourself in this world! You think I'm only a spoiled, petulant child! You do not know me! I do not know myself! I am full of evil! I feel it sensibly, when I am near you! You develope the worst of me! Should you marry me, the very demon would rise in my bosom! I should drive you to distraction!"

"You drive me to distraction *now*, you intoxicating little witch!" he exclaimed, laughing, and darting towards her.

She started and escaped his hand, crying,

"Saints in Heaven! What infatuation! What madness! It must be fate! Avert the fate, man! Avert it! while there is yet time! Go get a mill-stone and tie it around your neck, and cast yourself into the uttermost depths of the sea, before ever you dare to marry me!" Her cheeks were blazing with color, and her eyes with light! He saw only her transcendant beauty.

"Why, you little tragi-comic enchantress, you!—what do you mean? Come to my arms! Come, wild, bright bird! come to my bosom!" he said, stepping towards her, and throwing his arms around her.

"Vampire!" she exclaimed, struggling to free herself for a moment; and then as his lips sought hers the color faded from her face and the light died in her eyes, and he hastily released her and set her in a chair lest she should swoon in his hated arms.

"Now how am I expected to live with such a wife as this girl would make me? If it were not for the estate I should be tempted to give her up, and travel to forget her! How *shall* I overcome her repugnance? Not by courting her, that's demonstrated! Only by being kind to her, and letting her alone." Such was the tenor of his thoughts as he stood a little behind her chair out of her sight.

But Jacquelina, when she found herself free, soon recovered, and arose and left the room.

Why prolong the struggle?—the sorrowful, ineffectual struggle of a captured bird against the net drawing around it. Grief and fear and anxiety were new experience to Sans Souci's sunny, buoyant nature, and most strange and startling was the effect upon her. Defying, sinking, threatening, yielding—so alternately she passed the time.

> And now in laughter—now in tears,
> And madly still in each extreme
> She strove.

Until a day or two before Christmas, when, in the evening, she glided in to her uncle's room and sunk down by his side—so unlike herself—so like a spirit—that the old sinner impulsively shrank away from her, and put out his hand to ring for lights.

"No! don't send for candles, uncle! Such a wretch as I am should tell her errand in the dark."

"What do you mean *now*, Minx?"

"Uncle! in all your voyages round the world did you ever stop at Constantinople? and did you ever visit a slave mart there?"

"Yes—of course I have!—what then?—what—the—deuce are you dreaming of?"

"How much would such a girl as myself bring in the slave market of the Sultan's city?"

"Are you crazy?" asked the Commodore, opening his eyes to their widest extent.

"I don't know! If I am it can make little difference in your plans. But as there is method in my madness, please to answer my question. How much would I sell for in Constantinople?"

"You *are* mad, that's certain! How do I know—where beauties sell for from five hundred to many thousand zechins. But *you* wouldn't sell for much, you're too small and too thin."

"Beauty sells by the weight, does it? Well, uncle! I see that you have been accustomed to the mart, for you know how to cheapen the merchandize! Save yourself the trouble, uncle! I shall not live long, and therefore I shall not have the conscience to ask a high price for myself?"

"Mad! Mad as a March hare! as sure as shooting she is!" said the Commodore in dismay, starting at her until his great fat eyes seemed bursting from their sockets.

"Not so mad as you think, uncle, either. I have come to make a bargain with you!"

"What the foul fiend do you mean *now*? Do you want me to send you to Constantinople, pray?"

Jacquelina laughed, something like her old silvery laugh, as she answered,

"No, uncle! though if it were not for Mimmy, I really should prefer it to marrying Grim'!"

"What do you mean then? Speak!"

"This then, uncle. By what I have heard, and what I have seen, and what I have surmised, I am already as deep in your secrets respecting Grim' as you are yourself!"

"You speak falsely, you little ——! No one knows anything about it but myself?" exclaimed the Commodore, betraying himself through astonishment and indignation.

Without heeding the contradiction, except by a sly smile, Jacquelina went calmly on—

"And I know that you wish to make me a stalking-horse, to convey the estate to Grimshaw, only because you cannot give it to him in any other way but through his wife."

"What do you mean, you little diabolical—! It is my own—why can I not give it to whom I please, I should like to know?"

"You can give it to any one in the world, uncle, except Dr. Grimshaw, or to one who bears the same relationship to you that he does—for to such a one you may not legally bequeath your landed estate—or—"

"You shocking, impudent little vixen! how dare you talk so?"

"Hear me out, uncle! I say, knowing such to be the case, I also know my own importance as a 'stalking-horse,' or sumpter-mule, or something of the sort, to bear upon my own shoulders the burden of this estate, which you wish to give by me to Dr. Grimshaw. Therefore, I shall not give myself away for nothing. I intend to sell myself for a price! Nothing on earth would induce me to consent to marry Dr. Grimshaw, were it not to secure peace and comfort to my mother's latter days. Your threat of turning me out of doors would not compel me into such a marriage, for well I know that you would not venture to put that threat into execution. But I cannot bear to see my poor mother suffer so much as she does while here, dependent upon your uncertain protection. You terrify and distress her beyond her powers of endurance. You make the bread of dependence very, very bitter to her, indeed! And well I know that she will certainly die, if she remains subjected to your powers of tormenting. I speak plainly to you, uncle, having nothing to conceal; to proceed, I assure you I will not meet your views in marrying Dr. Grimshaw, unless it be to purchase for my poor mother a deliverance from bondage, and an independence for life. Therefore, I demand that you shall buy this place, 'Locust Hill,' which I hear can be bought for five thousand dollars, and settle it upon my mother—in return for which, I will bestow my hand in marriage upon Dr. Grimshaw! And mind! I do not promise with it either love, or esteem, or service—only my hand in civil marriage, and the estate it has the power of carrying with it! And the documents that shall make my mother independent of the world, must be drawn up or examined by a lawyer that she shall appoint, and must be placed in her hands on the same hour that gives *my* hand to Dr. Grimshaw. Do you understand? Now, uncle! that is my ultimatum! For, please the heavens above us! come what may! do what you will! turn me and my mother out of doors, to freeze and starve! I will die, and see *her* die, before I will sell my hand for a less price than will make her independent and at ease for life! For, look you—I would *rather* see her dead, than leave her in your power! Think of this, uncle! There is time enough to-morrow and next day to make all the arrangements, only be sure I am in earnest! Look in my face! Am I *not* in earnest?"

"I think you are, you little wretch! I could shake the life out of you!"

"That would be easy, uncle! There is not much to shake out! Only, in that case, you would have no stalking-horse to take the estate over to Dr. Grimshaw." And so saying, Jacquelina arose to leave the room.

"Come back here, you little vixen, you!"

Sans Souci returned.

"It's well to 'strike white the iron's hot,' and to bind you while you're willing to be bound—for you are an uncertain little villain! Though I don't believe you'd break a solemn pledge once given—hey!"

"No, sir!"

"Pledge me your word of honor, now, that if I buy this little farm of Locust Hill, and settle it upon your mother, you will marry Doctor Grimshaw on this coming Christmas Eve?"

"I pledge you my word of honor that I will."

"Without mental reservation?"

"Without mental reservation!"

"Stop! it is safer to seal such a pledge! Climb up on the stand, and hand me that Bible down off the top shelf. Brush the cobwebs off it, and don't let the spiders come with it."

Jacquelina did as she was bid, with a half indifferent, half disdainful air.

"There! Now lay your hand upon this book, and swear by the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, that you will do as you have pledged yourself to do."

"I swear!" said Jacquelina.

"Very well! Now, confound you, you may put the book back again, and go about your business."

Sans Souci very willingly complied. And then, as she left the room and closed the door after her, her quick ear caught the sound of the Commodore's voice, chuckling,

"So! I've trapped you! Ten minutes more, and it would have been impossible."

Full of wonder as to what his words might mean, doubting also whether she had heard them aright, Jacquelina was hasting on towards her mother's room, when she met her aunt Henrietta, hurrying towards her, and speaking impetuously,

"Oh, my little Lapwing, where have you been? I have been looking for you all over the house! Good news, dear Lapwing! Good news! Deliverance is at hand for you! Who do you think has come?"

"Who?—who?" questioned Sans Souci, eagerly.

"Cloudy!"

"Lost! lost!" cried the wretched girl, and, with a wild shriek that rang through all the house, she threw up her arms and fell forward to the ground.

CHAPTER XXI.

A GRIM WEDDING.

> "Oh! mother, mother, after this fell marriage,
> Let vultures wed with larks, and wolves with kids,
> And every creature with its mortal foe."—*New Drama.*

When Jacquelina recovered her senses, she found herself in her night-dress, lying upon her own white draperied bed. A dim fire was burning on the little hearth, and, by its fitful light, the room looked strange and ghostly—there was something weird even in the fat form of good Henrietta, as she stood by the bed holding the bottle of cologne water, and the saturated cambric handkerchief, with which she had just been bathing the poor girl's face and head.

"What—what is all this about, aunty? Is anything the matter?" asked Jacquelina, in a faint, uncertain voice.

"Nothing but a little fainting fit you've had, Lapwing! They're not dangerous. Aunty's had more than one in her own time, strong as she looks now, and you are getting over it already. Come! smell this."

"Oh! I know—I know now," said Sans Souci, as memory slowly returned.

"Aunty, will you go and send mother to me?"

"I would rather not, my dear, She doesn't know that you fainted."

"Don't tell her, then. Only say I'm tired and have gone to bed, and ask her to come,"

"I would much rather not, my dear. I want to have you all to myself to-night, to take care of you, and then to talk to you."

"Oh! no, don't talk to me, aunty. Dear, best aunty that ever was in the world! Don't talk to me—they've all talked to me too much; my head can't bear it, I believe."

"Honey! about Cloudy."

"Oh! don't—I know!—oh! never, again," she said, incoherently, and beginning to tremble.

Henrietta poured the cologne on the handkerchief, and doused her forehead and temples.

"That will do—thank you, dear aunty—ask mother to come."

Mrs. Waugh got up unwillingly, and left the room to do as she was requested. And presently the door opened, and Mrs. L'Oiseau came in. Jacquelina's eyes were wide open, and, in the shadow of her festooned curtains, seemed to shine like phosphorous.

"Are you sick, my dear?" asked Mary, sitting down by her side.

"No, mother, I don't know what I'm lying here for—oh, yes, I did what you told me—and—where was I?"

"What makes you tremble so, child? Collect your thoughts; you mentioned the purchase of Locust Hill to your uncle; now, what did he say?"

"Oh, yes! he will do it, Mimmy! and I will pay the price—ha! ha! ha! Oh, strange!"

"*What* is strange, Jacquelina? You really frighten me! What makes you go on so?"

"Life is!—how queer!—isn't it?"

Her eyes were shining like two stars, and the burning intensity of their gaze seemed to transfix the bosom of the weak woman, who had then urged her child to the very brink of madness. She started up, and moving more quickly than she was accustomed to do, hastened to her own chamber, and brought back a restorative, which she forced her daughter to swallow, The cordial soon took effect, and the girl became quiet, and spoke collectedly.

"Mother, I am afraid I'm not in my right mind—something tingles through all my nerves and veins, and leaps to the top of my head; and everything looks strange and grotesque to me; and serious things provoke laughter, and nothing looks real. Mother, am I mad?"

"You are hysterical, I am afraid, child. But that is nothing, you will soon get over it."

"Mother! Cloudy has come. His ship is at Norfolk. And he will be here soon."

"Well, my dear—what of that?"

"Oh, I don't know. My head is very weak—very weak. I am a very fragile creature, mother. But I am not unhappy; that is a good thing, sure enough. I am nothing but a fay, mother; not half good enough for dearest Cloudy."

"Now what do you talk about Cloudesley Mornington for? What has he to do with the subject on hand?"

"Oh! I don't know, I'm sure; if I *ever* did, it has gone from my mind now."

"Try to compose yourself, my dear, and go to sleep."

"Sleep? Oh! I'm not sleepy! You are going to be independent, Mimmy, and I am going to be whirled away and away like a leaf on a stream, no matter where."

Mrs. L'Oiseau thought it now best to keep silence, so she sat watching Jacquelina, as the poor, half-conscious girl lay there, letting her hand wander over the quilted figures on the Marseilles counterpane. Mrs. L'Oiseau said to herself,

"This is only hysterical; this is the worst pass, the crisis; let us be firm here—let her be pushed through this, and all the rest will be smooth; her life will settle down to the ordinary level of other lives; not happy, not miserable will she be, but as others. Only one thing is certain, Cloudesley must not be permitted to come home to this house, and I must see my uncle about that directly."

And so, while the poor girl lay only half conscious, her mother went out and sought the presence of the Commodore, and gave him the warning.

"Oh! I know," he said. "Who do you think is a fool? I wrote to him this very night to stay away."

Vain was that letter! for the very hour that saw it start from the post-office at B——, saw Cloudy, full of hope and joy, leave Norfolk for home.

The next day Jacquelina was lying in bed, too weak to rise, when she heard a little bustle as of some sudden arrival below stairs—rising on her elbow she listened eagerly Yes, it was Cloudesley's voice, and she heard him ask eagerly,

"Where is Lina?"

"Here! here! dear Cloudy! Run up here! Quick! Quick, Cloudy," she cried vehemently, impetuously rising from the cloud of drapery around her, pale, wan, spiritual; *not* like Venus rising from the sea foam. And she heard his impatient, hasty step upon the stairs, as he ran up, and hurried in, and hurried to her bedside, exclaiming,

"Sick, Lina?"

But she rose up and threw herself upon his bosom, even as she used to do in infancy, and clasped her arms around his neck and burst into a passion of tears, clinging and sobbing, clinging and sobbing.

"Jacquelina, my dear child, you must not do so! that is very wrong. My conscience! what will Doctor Grimshaw say? And your uncle? Jacquelina, *don't* do so!" said Mrs. L'Oiseau, coming around from the other side of the bed.

But Jacquelina clung and wept, and felt Cloudesley's heart swelling, throbbing against her own.

"What—what is the matter?" asked Cloudy, in great perplexity and trouble.

"Why, she's engaged to be married to Doctor Grimshaw to-morrow morning, and she *ought not* to do so!" said Mrs. L'Oiseau.

Cloudy grew very pale and compressed his lips, and tried to unclasp Jacquelina's arms, and force her off. But she clung and wept; crying between her sobs,

"Oh, Cloudy! let me! let me! only this once! I'll soon get done! and then, and then, never come again, Cloudy. Good-bye! Good-bye forever!" and her hands released their hold, and she sunk back. And, without a word, Cloudy turned and left the room, and walked down stairs and took his hat, and, without saying good-bye to a single soul, left the house forever.

Jacquelina wildly stretched her arms towards her mother.

"Oh, Mimmy, Mimmy! it was for *your* sake I did it—*yours!* Oh, Mimmy, hold me, hold me to keep my heart from breaking."

Mrs. L'Oiseau came and sat down by her and took her hand, and began to talk to her, telling her that she was a good, dutiful child, that she had acted nobly and disinterestedly, and that God would bless and prosper her. But Jacquelina shook her head.

"No, mother, no; what you say is not so. I have not done well; God will not bless me. But oh, Mimmy, love me, love me a great deal or my heart will break; swathe it, bind it all around with your love, Mimmy, and keep it from breaking. But that's so selfish in me, too, for what will *he* do—poor fellow, who has no mother?"

"Who, child, Grim'?"

"'Grim'!' ha, ha, ha! no; had Grim' *ever* a mother?"

"How you act, child. Here, take your rosary and say your prayers, it will compose your mind—"

"*This heart! this heart!*"

"What are you talking of, child?"

"To find out one has a heart first by its *aching*, Mimmy?"

"It will go off soon, dear."

"Yes! Will it?"

And so—sometimes weeping, sometimes rambling in her mind, but never laughing, or defying, or threatening as before, Jacquelina passed the day and night.

"This is the worst; push her through, rub her through this crisis, and she will then calm down and be resigned; people can't be happy in this sad world, but let them learn contentment as soon as they can," said Mary L'Oiseau to herself. And,

"Only let her be once married to Grim', and d—d if I care," said the Commodore to himself.

The struggle was over. Sans Souci felt it to be over, yet nothing like the *quietude* of despair fell upon her.

The marriage was appointed to take place after matins, at nine o'clock, Christmas day, in the Catholic chapel.

That morning Jacquelina arose at eight from her restless couch, and suffered her mother to dress her in bridal array, to set the wreath of orange flowers on her golden ringlets, to arrange the lace veil at the back of her head, to draw on her tiny white gloves, all in silence.

"You don't speak a word to me, Jacquelina."

"Because I'm so tired, Mimmy. Do you remember the man who swore he wouldn't get up and be hanged because he hadn't got his nap out? Well! now if I had not to get up and be married, I had rather lie down and go to rest again."

"You talk such nonsense, child! but then you always did. You haven't even asked who were to be your bridesmaids and groomsmen."

"I had forgotten such attendants were necessary, Mimmy."

"Yes, and *I* suppose if *I* had been as thoughtless as *you* there would have been none provided. However, they are down stairs, waiting to attend you to the altar. Come, my child. You are ready now, I believe, and the carriage is waiting—shall we go down?"

"Yes, Mimmy."

"Mrs. L'Oiseau opened the door, and held it open in a fidgetty, impatient manner, but still Jacquelina lingered.

"Come, my dear, come, what are you waiting for?"

"Mother, not *one* blessing—not *one* 'God speed' to me before I go! Even the ghastly old judge says 'God have mercy on your soul' to the felon he sends out to be executed, though I never knew any one to thrive after such a benediction! But, mother, 'I have great need of blessing.'"

"You are a little goose, Jacquelina! of course I mean—the 'Lord bless you,' certainly I do! You might have known it without my saying it!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, mother, I accept it!" said the bride, passing out and descending the stairs.

Doctor Grimshaw was waiting for her in the hall, looking well, if he ever looked well in his life. He was dressed in a suit of speckless black broadcloth, with a white brocade vest and stock, and white kid gloves;—his tall, straight figure and Wellington profile, standing him in good stead for dignity.

As soon as she reached the foot of the stairs, he took her hand, and pressing it, whispered,

" Sweet girl, forgive me this persistence!"

May God never forgive *me* if I do!" she fiercely exclaimed, transfixing him with a flashing glance!

" But that is impious! I love you so much, Jacquelina. I shall devote my life to you! I will do anything on earth to make you happy!"

" Will you, though?"

" Only try me, dearest?"

" Give me up, then? Take the responsibility upon yourself, and tell uncle that you will not marry me! Reject me at the very church!"

" Ah, beautiful one! you have set a snare for me! I meant to say that after we are married—when you are my own, *then* I will devote my life to your happiness!"

" You will?"

" Yes."

" You are sure?"

" *Certain*, my angel!"

" Very well, I accept the offering of your life in atonement for this wrong—and immediately after the marriage ceremony, I request that you go out and shoot, or drown yourself—it does not matter which, so that it is done quickly!"

" Jacquelina, that is very wicked!"

" Dr. Grimshaw, I believe you expect to go to Heaven!"

" I humbly hope so!"

" Very well, then! now understand why it is that I choose to be wicked—*I don't want to go to Heaven with you.* I trust in the *next life* at least, a deep gulf as that which separates Lazarus and Dives may keep us apart!"

" Shall I never be able to win your heart?"

" Satan shall win my soul sooner!"

Never lover uttered a deeper sigh than that which Dr.

Grimshaw gave forth as he led his unwilling bride to the carriage. The groomsman followed with the bridesmaid. The Commodore and Mary L'Oiseau accompanied the party in a gig. Henrietta, true to her word, refused to be present at the marriage.

When the wedding party arrived at the chapel, all the pews were filled to suffocation with the crowd that the rumor of the approaching marriage had drawn together. And the bridal party were the cynosure of many hundred eyes as they passed up the aisle and stood before the altar.

The bride and bridegroom knelt, as is the custom in a Catholic solemnization of marriage. Jacquelina kept her eyes fixed upon the ground, and her lips firmly compressed.

The ceremony proceeded, and only once, when the usual question was put, whether any one there present knew any cause why these two should not be joined in holy wedlock, the bride slowly raised her head, and looked fixedly in succession upon each member of her party, as wondering how, in God's awful presence, they dared to meet and disregard that solemn adjuration. The ceremony proceeded. But not *one* response, either verbally or mentally, did Jacquelina make. The priest passed over her silence, naturally ascribing it to bashfulness, and honestly taking her consent for granted.

The rites were finished, the benediction bestowed, and friends and acquaintances left their pews, and crowded around with congratulations.

Among the foremost was Thurston Willcoxen, whose suave and stately courtesy, and graceful bearing, and gracious words, so pleased Commodore Waugh that, knowing Jacquelina to be married and *safe*, he invited and urged the accomplished young "Parisian," as he was often called, to return and partake of the Christmas wedding breakfast.

"Nace! do you take your bride home in the gig, as you will want her company to yourself, and we will go in the carriage," said the Commodore, good naturedly. In fact, the old man had not been in such a fine humor for many a day.

Dr. Grimshaw, "nothing loth," led his fair bride to the gig, handed her in, and took the place beside her.

"Now then, fairest and dearest, you are at last, indeed, my own!" he said, seeking her eyes.

"Thank Heaven, I am *not;* I never foreswore myself! I never opened my lips, or formed a vow in my head. I never promised you anything," said Jacquelina, turning away.

"Your love will be very hard to win! but little, petulant creature, I shall not distress you. Come now, turn around and give me a smile—I will not even ask you for a kiss just now—but do not, while I am forming resolutions for your peace, treat me as if I were Satan."

"I don't," replied she, with ineffable scorn curling her beautiful lip, "for I am sure that I have some sort of respect for Satan, whereas I have none whatever for you. To marry a girl against her will! *Oh! shame!*"

His cheek suddenly blanched, his teeth snapped with that spasmodic catch habitual to him when suddenly enraged—he spoke in a husky tone.

"Jacquelina, take care! It would not be well or wise to make an enemy of me!"

"And what do you suppose I care if you *are* an enemy? *Be* an enemy! Do your *worst.* Be as wicked as you please! *Then,* maybe, I shall have a chance to go to Heaven, for I don't want to go where *you* go when I die!"

"Are you insane?"

"I don't know—maybe! but while I have some memory and understanding left, I wish to remind you that I only consented to be married in accordance with a bargain made with uncle, of this kind—Uncle wished to leave you Luckenough, but for a reason you doubtless know better than I do, he could not do so—he could only confer it upon you through your wife—therefore, to endow you with Luckenough, I consented to a form of marriage, on condition that uncle should buy Locust Hill, and make it over to mother. All this has been done this day. Early in the spring, Luckenough will be ready for the reception of the family. Aunt and uncle, and yourself, as their successor, will remove thither. Mother will be left in possession of her farm at Locust Hill. *And I shall remain with my mother.* And in the meantime, Dr. Grimshaw, you will please to leave me *alone!*"

"That is a beautiful arrangement! Have you the least idea that I shall agree to it?"

"Yes, indeed! because uncle promised in your name."

Dr. Grimshaw now stopped the horse for a moment, and said,

"Jacquelina! look around here! *Your uncle made that promise in my name?*"

"Yes, indeed, he did! it was the only condition upon which he could obtain my consent!"

"He promised that, and you believed him?"

"Why certainly I did, as I said before."

"And you really think that I shall consent to this nominal marriage?"

"Yes, I *do*—because this marriage will answer your purpose; it is formal, legal, and when uncle gives me Luckenough, the *law* will give you a life possession of the estate—of which nothing can deprive you—and mother has the deeds of Locust Hill, of which nothing can deprive *her.* Thus all the conditions are fulfilled. I promised nothing more either to uncle, to you, or to God in the church!"

"And you thought me base enough to consent to such a marriage for such a purpose!"

"Yes. When you wished to marry me, whether I would or no, I thought you base enough for *anything!*"

"Take care, girl!"

"Take care of *what?* I'm not afraid of you, Dr. Grimshaw! Now that mother is independent of the world, I am not afraid of *anything!*"

"I am your husband, however, which gives me some power, did I please to use it!"

"You are *not!* You never *shall* be," she said, with flashing eyes, "while there remains an escape for me by death!"

"I have noticed that those who make such deadly threats never put them in execution. You have not courage enough to kill yourself, my girl. You would suffer a great deal before you would dare to die! And you are not called upon to suffer at *all.* I wish to love you, if you will let me!"

"That was not in the bond!"

"We shall see! But, here we are at home, Jacquelina. And here are the good folks all waiting to greet 'the happy pair,'" he said, with a sardonic smile, as he pulled up the horse, sprang from the gig, and offered his hand to assist her to alight.

She tossed her head and curled her lip, and merely touched his hand with the tip of her white glove as she sprang down and passed on. He threw the reins to a groom in attendance, and followed her. He overtook her, drew her reluctant arm in his, and led her into the house. And there we must leave them for the present.

PART FOURTH.

CHAPTER XXII.

DELL-DELIGHT.

"It is a chosen spot of fertile land,
As if it had by nature's cunning hand
Bene choycely picked out from all the rest,
And laid forth for ensample of the best."—*Spenser.*

It should have been an enchanting home to which Thurston Willcoxen returned after his long sojourn in Europe. A few necessary words must introduce you to the place and its proprietor. The place, Dell-Delight, might once have deserved its euphonious and charming name; *now*, however, its delightfulness was as purely traditional as the royal lineage claimed by its owners. Yet it was a perfect piece of nature's handiwork:—

A long, narrow dell, bounded on three sides by gently undulating hills, and sloping down to the bay on the fourth.

The mansion-house, a square, massive edifice of white stone, with verandas running before every story, stood at the upper end of the dell.

From the portico, you looked down a long vista, between the wooded hills that ended in two bold bluffs, between which, as through a portal, you caught sight of the flashing, glancing waters of the bay. From the second story the view was still more extensive.

And from the balustraded walk on the roof, you could command the whole circumference of land and water, from the centre to the horizon, and could feel that you really lived upon the surface of the great earth, in the immensity of space.

Such is the effect in some positions of a little difference in elevation. And in different moods of mind you might prefer the grand, inspiring view from the top, or the sweet, secluded, home-like, almost caressing aspect of the gentle hills, and the smile of the water caught between them. To the confined and wearied citizens both had been delightful.

In its palmy days the grounds of Dell-Delight had been beautifully laid out and adorned, and carefully kept up.

But since coming into the hands of the present proprietor, Cloudesley Willcoxen, everything not strictly useful in making or in saving money had been permitted to fall to decay, rather than preserved at the expense of a few hundred dollars.

Yet old Mr. Willcoxen was not a miser, in the most repulsive sense of the word; he was only an excessively parsimonious utilitarian.

Time, money and labor, was the trinity he believed in and worshipped. And not a moment of time, a dollar of money, or a stroke of labor that could be devoted to the increase of crops of tobacco for exportation, would he consent to see "thrown away" upon ornamental or landscape gardening. Nay, even the culture of fruit trees, flowers, and kitchen vegetables, were neglected as things of minor importance.

And Dell-Delight, in his hands, gradually assumed the most mournful and inharmonious of all aspects, that of prematurely ruined beauty.

Mr. Willcoxen was one of those whose God is Mammon. He had inherited money, married a half-sister of Commodore Waugh for money, and made money. Year by year, from youth to age, adding thousands to thousands, acres to acres, until now, at the age of ninety-five, he was the master of incalculable riches.

And all this wealth was strictly his own, to dispose of as he pleased. There was not even a foot of his landed estate entailed. He could devise the whole of it to whomsoever reason or caprice might select as his heir.

He had outlived his wife and their three children; and his nearest of kin were Thurston Willcoxen, the son of his eldest son; Cloudesley Mornington, the son of his eldest daughter, and poor Fanny Laurie, the child of his youngest daughter.

Thurston and Fanny had each inherited a small property independent of their grandfather.

But poor Cloudy had been left an orphan in the worst sense of the word—destitute and dependent on the "cold charity of the world," or the colder and bitterer alms of unloving rich relatives.

The oldest and nearest kinsman and natural guardian of the boys—old Mr. Willcoxen—had of course received them into his house to be reared and educated; but no education would he afford the lads beyond that dispensed by the village schoolmaster, who could very well teach them that ten dimes make a dollar, and ten dollars an eagle; and who could also instruct them how to write their own names—for instance, at the foot of receipts of so many hundred dollars for so many hogsheads of tobacco; or to read other men's signatures, to wit, upon the backs of notes of hand payable at such a time, or on such a day. This was just knowledge enough, he said, to teach the boys how to make and save money, yet not enough to tempt them to spend it foolishly in travel, libraries, pictures, statues, arbors, fountains, and such costly trumpery and expensive tomfoolery.

To Thurston, who was his favorite, probably because he bore the family name and inherited some independent property, Mr. Willcoxen would, however, have afforded a more liberal and gentlemanly education, could he have done so and at the same time decently withheld from going to some expense in giving his penniless grandson, Cloudy, the same privilege. As it was, he sought to veil his parsimony by conservative principle.

It was a great humiliation to the boys to see that, while all the youths of their own rank and neighborhood were entered pensioners at the local college, they two alone were taken from the little day-school to be put to agricultural labor—a thing unprecedented in that locality at that time.

When this matter was brought to the knowledge of Commodore Waugh, as he strode up and down his hall, the indignant old sailor thumped his heavy stick upon the ground, thrust forward his great head, and swore furiously by the whole Pandemonial Hierarchy that *his* grandnephews should not be brought up like clodhoppers.

And straightway he ordered his carriage, threw himself into it, and rode over to Charlotte Hall, where he entered the names of his two young relatives as pensioners at his own proper cost.

This done, he ordered his coachman to take the road to Dell-Delight, where he had an interview with Mr. Willcoxen.

And as he met little opposition from the old man, who seemed to think that it was no more than fair that the boys' uncle should share the expense of educating them—he sought out the youths, whom he found in the field, and bade them leave the plough, and go and prepare themselves to go to C—— and get educated, as befitted the grandnephews of a gentleman!

The lads were at that time far too simple-minded and too clannish to feel their pride piqued at this offer, or to take offence at the rude manner in which it was made. Commodore Waugh was their granduncle, and therefore had a *right* to educate them, and to be short with them, too, if he pleased. That was the way in which they also looked at the matter. And very much delighted and very grateful they were for the opening for education thus made for them.

And very zealously they entered upon their academical studies. They boarded at the college and roomed together. But their vacations were spent apart,—Thurston spending his at Dell-Delight, and Cloudy his at Luckenough.

When the academical course was completed, Commodore Waugh, as has been seen, was at some pains to give Cloudy a fair start in life, and for the first time condescended to use his influence with "the Department" to procure a favor in the shape of a midshipman's warrant for Cloudesley Mornington.

In the meantime, old Mr. Willcoxen was very gradually sinking into the imbecility natural to his advanced age; and his fascinating grandson was gaining some ascendancy over his mind. Year by year this influence increased, though it must be admitted that Thurston's conquest over his grandfather's whims, was as slow as that of the Hollanders in winning the land from the sea.

However, the old man—now that Cloudy was provided for and off his hands, lent a more willing ear to the petition of Thurston to be permitted to continue his education by a course of studies at a German university, and afterwards by a tour of the Eastern continent.

Thurston's absence was prolonged much beyond the original intention, as has been related—he spent two years at the university, two in travel, and nearly two in the city of Paris.

His grandfather would certainly never have consented to this prolonged absence, had it been at his own cost; but the expenses were met by advances upon Thurston's own small patrimony.

And in fact, when at last the young gentleman returned to his native country, it was because his property was nearly exhausted, and his remittances were small, few, and far between. grudgingly sent, and about to be stopped. Therefore nearly penniless, but perfectly free from the smallest debt or degradation—elegant, accomplished, fastidious—yet truthful, generous, gallant and aspiring, Thurston left the elegant saloon and exciting scenes of Paris, for the comparative dullness and dreariness of his native place and his grandfather's house.

He had reached his legal majority just before leaving Paris. And soon after his arrival at home, he was appointed trustee of poor Fanny Laurie's property.

His first act was to visit Fanny in the distant asylum in which she was confined, and ascertain her real condition. And having heard her pronounced incurable, though perfectly harmless, he determined to release her from the confinement of the asylum. and to bring her home to her native county, where among the woods and hills and streams, she might find at once that freedom, space and solitude so desired by the heart-sick or brain-sick, and where also his own care might avail her.

Old Mr. Willcoxen, far from offering opposition to this plan, actually favored it—though from the less worthy motive of economy. What was the use of spending money to pay her board, and nursing, and medical attendance, in the asylum, when she might be boarded and nursed and doctored so much cheaper at home? For the old man confidently looked forward to the time when the poor, fragile, failing creature would sink into the grave, and Thurston would become her heir. And he calculated that every dollar they could save of her income, would be so much added to the inheritance when Thurston should come into it.

Very soon after Thurston's return home, his grandfather gave him to understand the conditions upon which he intended to make him his heir—they were two in number—viz., first, that Thurston should never leave him again while he lived—and secondly, that he should never marry without his consent. "For I don't wish to be left alone in my old age, my dear boy—nor do I wish to see you throw yourself away upon any girl whose fortune is *less* than the estate I intend to bequeath entire to yourself."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MARIAN, THE INSPIRER.

"Oh! she that hath a heart of that fine frame
To pay this debt of love but to her neighbor,
How will she love when the rich golden shaft
Hath killed the flock of all affections else
That live in her!—when bosom, brain and heart,
Those sovereign thrones, are all supplied and filled—
Her sweet perfections—with but one self-king."—*Shakspeare.*

It was not fortunate for old Mr. Willcoxen's plans, that his grandson should have met Marian Mayfield. For, on the morning of Thurston's first meeting with the charming girl, when he turned his horse's head from the arched gateway of Old Field Cottage and galloped off, "a haunting shape and image gay" attended him.

It was that of beautiful Marian, with her blooming face and sunny hair, and rounded roseate neck and bosom and arms, all softly, delicately flushed with the pure glow of rich, luxuriant vitality, as she stood in the sunlight, under the arch of azure morning-glories, with her graceful arms raised in the act of binding up the vines.

That was the enchanting picture! And no slightest beauty of it was lost or dimmed in memory—no glisten of the sun rays in the ripples of her golden bronze hair; no shadow of the eyelashes on her blushing cheeks; no curve of the fresh ripe lips; no rise and fall of the rounded, glowing bosom; no motion of the rosy arms, that was not like a breathing life before him.

At first this "image fair" was almost unthought of—he was scarcely conscious of the haunting presence, or the life and light it gradually diffused through his whole being. And when the revelation dawned upon his intellect, he smiled to himself, and wondered if, for the first time, he was falling in love; and then he grew grave, and tried to banish the dangerous thought. But when, day after day, amid all the business and the pleasures of his life, the "shape" still pursued him, instead of getting angry with it or growing weary of it, he opened his heart and took it in, and made it at home, and set it upon a throne, where it reigned supreme, diffusing delight over all his nature. But soon, too soon, this bosom's sovereign became the despot, and stung, goaded and urged him to see again its living, breathing, glowing, most beautiful original! To seek her?—for what? He did not even try to answer the question.

Thus passed one week.

And then, had he been disposed to forget the beautiful girl, he could not have done so. For everywhere where the business of his grandfather took him, around among the neighboring planters, to the villages of B—— or of C——, everywhere he heard of Marian, and frequently he saw her, though at a distance, or under circumstances that made it impossible for him, without rudeness, to address her. He both saw and heard of her in scenes and society where he could hardly have expected to find a young girl of her insignificant position.

He made some very discreet and seemingly indifferent little inquiries about her, and adroitly led on others to speak of her And from all he heard of her goodness, her disinterestedness, and her young wisdom blended with sweet and gracious joyousness.

And, in truth, it is seldom that a creature so nearly faultless appears, or that in a world so given to envy and detraction as this, a young girl so beautiful and gifted as Marian wins such universal suffrages in her favor. The reasons might have been partly these: A stranger and a foreigner, without the advantages of wealth, family, or social position, in the most conservative and exclusive of all neighborhoods, her personal excellencies, without worldly distinctions, could not stand in the way of any one. She lived a very cheerful, busy, beneficent, and unexacting life, seldom leaving her little home except at the call of duty or benevolence. Truly those errands often drew her forth, for Marian was eminently social and sympathetic. She was the friend of everybody. Her sweetest earthly pleasure was the pure one of doing good, relieving pain, supplying want, comforting affliction, conferring benefits, and her highest earthly joy, approaching that of Heaven, was—*the delight of delighting others!* Both queen and priestess she should have been, by right of these instincts and capacities. These constituted her happiness, these gave her power and influence far beyond the sphere of her rank and sex and circumstances, and these, alas! finally contributed to work her lasting, bitter woe!

And how much of her young life, her spirit's strength, she contrived to infuse into the apathetic community around her.

There were several notable improvements commenced within the last few years in the two villages and in the county. These were day-schools for the children of the poor, and night-schools for young men otherwise employed during the day. There were Sunday-schools. There were societies for relieving and improving the condition of the poor. And, finally, there was an annual fair for stimulating the enterprize and emulation of farmers and housewives, and for rewarding excellence in agriculture, floriculture, gardening, and domestic economy in all its branches.

And when Thurston learned the origin and history of these new agents of progress that were gradually quickening the old, torpid community into life, and preparing its perfect resurrection from the dead, he discovered also that the beautiful and gifted Marian had been the Inspirer!

Strange, and passing strange, that a young girl, without fortune, without family, without social distinction of any sort should, by the mere strength of heart and brain, the faculty of much loving and great thinking, have attained such a spell over hearts and minds, a power that she used, as she used all her advantages, for the good of humanity.

And Thurston marvelled that one of such humble fortunes should have gained such an influence, and moved in such enterprizes.

"Humble fortunes!" Had Marian been a "crowned queen" she could not have felt or revealed a more natural, serene and unobtrusive consciousness of personal power—a more habitual self-possession, self-reliance, and self-respect; and all this "self" was without selfishness, as every act of her life proved, and this air and manner inspired perfect faith in those whom she wished to influence.

When Thurston heard her spoken of, it was not with the mere admiration bestowed upon a beautiful girl, but with a certain esteem, deference, or enthusiastic encomium, according to the age or temperament of the speakers.

She was scarcely twenty years of age, yet in the last three or four years had refused more eligible offers of marriage than any heiress in the county. Far the least notable among the rejected being Doctor Weismann, who, unknown to Miss Nancy, who kept him tied to her apron string, had made the offer of his heart, hand, and professional prospects to the portionless girl. And the most *important* among them was the judge of the county court, a grave, handsome man of middle age and considerable property, who sought to win the beautiful Marian through what he *mis*-judged to be her ruling passions, the love of power, and the power of patronage. He urged upon her the argument of how widely the sphere of her influence and usefulness would be increased, when she should become the wife of a man of property and extensive connections. But,

"No," was Marian's laughing rejoinder; "I have observed that in this country, when a woman becomes the sole property ot one man, she loses her influence with all the rest."

"Then," said the judge, "for the sake of general usefulness, you purpose to live a single life."

"Well, *yes*, I think so," answered Marian, "though I have taken no vows."

Sound virgin heart was hers, that had never been trifled with, never breathed upon by man's love—all declarations and protestations of the sort reached no farther than her ear.

And Thurston knew that this rich, large heart, though often wooed, was still unwon. Did the dream of attempting its conquest enter his mind? Scarcely—certainly not to be willingly entertained there; for however he might admire the enchanting girl, he durst not marry her. Any other young man in the county, might *now*, without much opposition from his friends, have won, if he could, the hand of Marian; but not the heir apparently of gold-worshiping old Willcoxen. Yet Thurston *was* glad to know that her heart was untouched, and he longed to see once more this lovely nonpareil.

The opportunity was not long in presenting itself.

Marian was a regular attendant of the Protestant church at Benedict, where, before the morning service, she taught in the Sunday school—and before the afternoon service, she received a class of colored children.

And Thurston, who had been a very careless and desultory attendant, sometimes upon the Catholic chapel, sometimes upon the Protestant church, now became a very regular frequenter of the latter place of worship; the object of *his* worship being —not the Creator, but the creature! whom, if he missed from her accustomed seat, the singing, and praying, and preaching for him lost all of its meaning, power and spirituality! In the church-yard he sometimes tried to catch her eye and bow to her—but was always completely baffled in his aspirations after a nearer communion. She was always attended from the church, and assisted into her saddle by Judge Provost, Colonel Thornton, or some other "potent, grave and reverend seigniors," who "hedged *her* about with a divinity" that it was impossible, without rudeness and intrusion, to break through. The more he was baffled and perplexed, the more eager became his desire to cultivate her acquaintance. Had his course been clear to woo her for his wife—it would have been easy to ask permission of Edith to visit her at her house; but such was not the case—and Thurston, tampering with his own integrity of purpose, rather wished that this much coveted acquaintance should be incidental, and their interviews seem *accidental*, so that he should not commit himself, or in any way lead her to form expectations which he had no surety of being able to meet. How long this cool and cautious foresight might avail him, if once he were brought in close companionship with Marian, remains to be seen. It happened one Sunday afternoon in October, that he saw Marian take leave of her venerable escort, Colonel Thornton, at the church-yard gate, and gayly and alone turn into the forest road that led to her own home. He immediately threw himself into his saddle and followed her, with the assumed air of an indifferent gentleman pursuing his own path. He overtook her near one of those gates that frequently intersect the road. Bowing, he passed her, opened the gate and held it open for her passage. Marian smiled, and nodded with a pleasant,

"Good afternoon, Mr. Willcoxen," as she went through.

Thurston closed the gate and rode on after her.

"This is glorious weather, Miss Mayfield."

"Glorious, indeed!" replied Marian, turning her eyes from the gorgeous coloring of the autumn woods to the western sky, "where the rich sunset burned."

"And the country, too, is perfectly beautiful at this season. I never could sympathize with the poets who call autumnal days 'the melancholy days—the saddest of the year.'"

"Nor I," said Marian; "for to me, autumn, with its refulgent skies and gorgeous woods and rich harvest and its prospect of Christmas cheer and wintry repose has ever seemed a gay and festive season. The year's great work is done, the harvest is gathered, enjoyment is present, and repose at hand."

"In the world of society," said Thurston, "it is in the evening, after the labor or the business of the day is over, that the gayest scenes of festivity occur, just preceding the repose of sleep. So I receive your thought of the autumn—the evening of the year, preceding the rest of winter. Nature's year's work is done—she puts on her most gorgeous robes, and holds a festival before she sinks to her winter's sleep."

Marian smiled brightly upon him.

"Yes! my meaning, I believe, only more pointedly expressed."

That smile! that smile! It lightened through all his nature with electric, life-giving, spirit-realizing power—elevating and inspiring his whole being—his face, too, was radiant with life as he answered the maiden's smile.

But something in his eyes caused Marian's glances to fall, and the rosy clouds to roll up over her cheeks and brow.

Then Thurston governed his countenance—let no ardent or admiring glance escape, and when he spoke again, his manner and words were more deferential.

"We spoke of the world of nature, Miss Mayfield, but how is it with the world of man? To many, nay, to most of the human race, autumn is the herald of a season, not of festivity and repose, but of continued labor, and increased want and privation and suffering."

"That is because society is not in harmony with nature—man has wandered as far from nature as from God," said Marian.

"And as much needs a Saviour to lead him back to the one as to the other," replied Thurston.

"You know that—you feel it," said Marian, turning upon him one of her soul-thrilling glances.

Thurston trembled with delicious pleasure through all his frame, but guarding his eyes, lest again they should frighten off her inspiring glances, he answered, fervently,

"I know and feel it most profoundly."

And Thurston thought he spoke the very truth, though in sober fact he had never thought or felt anything about the subject until now that Marian, his inspirer, poured her life-giving spirit into his soul.

She spoke again, earnestly, ardently.

"You know and feel it most profoundly!—That deep knowledge and that deep feeling, is the chrism oil that has anointed you a messenger and a laborer in the cause of humanity. 'Called and chosen,' be thou also faithful. There are many inspired, many anointed, but few are faithful!"

"Thou, then, art the high priestess that hast poured the consecrated oil on my head. I will be faithful!"

He spoke with such sudden enthusiasm, such *abandon*, that it had the effect of bringing Marian back to the moderation and *retenue* of her usual manner. He saw it in the changed expression of her countenance—and what light or shade of feeling passed over that beautiful face unmarked of him? When he spoke again it was composedly.

"You speak as the preachers and teachers preach and teach —in general terms; be explicit; what would you have me to do, Miss Mayfield? Only indicate my work, and tell me how to set about the accomplishment of it, and never knight served liege lady as I will serve you!"

Marian smiled.

"Nay, women can more readily set tasks to men, than instruct them in the execution of the work. Yet, it seems to me that I can at least point out the scene of your labors—"

"And that is—"

"*Here!*"

"Here!"

"Aye, here, in your native place. No spot needs you so much as this, to which you were given."

"Pardon me, Miss Mayfield," he said, smiling in his turn, "but this place is so *effete*, so dead, so hopeless!"

"Do you find it so? Why should that be? The earth *here*, as elsewhere, looks to-day as young, as fresh, and as vigorous as if just turned from the hand of its Creator—finished, perfect. And, in truth, every day *is* a new creation!"

"Yes! in the world of *nature*—thou glorious child of nature! but in the world of man, as I asked before, how is it in the world of man? groveling, weariness, sloth, torpor! Hopeless materials to work upon!"

"Yet, in the world of man, *here*, as elsewhere, there is an ever-springing fountain of new life and promise, and an ever new day of creation—it is in childhood and youth, to whom the earth is all alive as upon the morning of the divine birth, who are ever susceptible to new inspirations and new truths. Children, at least, are alive and impressible, and the children this generation, remember, will be the law-givers of the next. I would have all reformers and philanthropists, while preaching to grown people, not to forget the children, but to bring their truths to bear upon them as the seed of promise."

Marian ceased, and Thurston remained in thought for a few minutes; then he said,

"I confess that, when I have dreamed of a useful and honorable career, the scene of my visions has not ever been this obscure county."

"You dreamed, perhaps, of acting in some of the world's great thoroughfares?"

"Yes."

"And why? Our Divine Master commenced his labors, not among the great nations of the earth, but in His birth-place, an obscure province. The Great Messiah appeared not at Rome—at that day the great nucleus of the world's life and business—but in remote, effete, deadened Galilee. His humble follower of to-day need not go to Washington, or New-York, to London, or Paris, or upon any of the world's great platforms. Let him light his lamp in his native place—for the people among whom he was born—to whom he was sent—and, if the light be the true light, its rays will spread—never doubt it."

Thurston smiled again; a curious, doubtful sort of smile, which, had Marian seen it, would not have inspired her with confidence.

"So," he said, "the scene of my labor being fixed, now for the manner of it."

"Oh!" said Marian, laughing, and parodying the words of Portia, 'I could easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than show one of the twenty how to follow my own teaching.' But, first, I think you should endeavor to purify and elevate the tone of thought and feeling in the community."

"But *how?*"

"Oh! in this way: men here, as elsewhere, have brains and hearts, intelligence and loves, apathetic as they are. Seek to stimulate and quicken those dormant faculties—act upon their intellects and their affections—act upon their passions, if necessary, for even *they* were given for good purposes, though so often turned to evil ones."

"Again—how?"

"How? Oh! you must make yourself a position from which to influence them. I do not know that I can advise you how: but you will find a way! As—were *I* a man, *I* should!"

"Being a woman, you have done wonders."

"*For* a woman," said Marian, with a glance full of archness and merriment.

"No, no, for *any* one, man or woman. But your method, Marian? I beg your pardon, Miss Mayfield," he added, with a blush of ingenuous embarrassment.

"Nay, now," said the frank girl, "do call me Marian if that name springs more readily to your lips than the other. Almost all persons call me Marian, and I like it."

A rush of pleasure thrilled all through his veins—he gave her words a meaning and a value for himself, that they did not certainly possess; he forgot that the grace extended to him was extended to *all*—nay, that she had even *said* as much in the very words that gave it. He answered,

"And if I do, fairest Marian, shall I *too*, hear my own Christian name in music from your lips?"

"Oh! I do not know," said the beautiful girl, laughing and blushing, "if it ever comes naturally, *perhaps*, certainly not *now*. Why, the venerable Colonel Thornton calls me 'Marian,' but it never comes to me to call him 'John!'"

Thurston's rapture suddenly fell to zero. He rode on in silence.

"Come," said Marian, gayly, "let us return to what we were talking of—you were inquiring—"

"What your method—your system of action has been, in gaining and wielding an influence that has resulted in so much good, Miss Mayfield?" He would not now call her "Marian," he would not accept *that* privilege when shared by Colonel Thornton, or any other man alive.

"My method—my system? I had *none*," said Marian, "but the history of what has been done is briefly this: The evils of your community are perhaps much more apparent in a *stranger*, especially to a European coming here with exaggerated ideas of what the 'model republic' *is*, or ought to be, than to a native resident. And, therefore, I confess that I was astonished, *shocked*, to find in any part of democratic America, a prevalence and tyranny of rank so absolute and offensive as that which exists *here*—greater, I take it upon me to say, than can be found in any part of England. No less was I grieved and disappointed to find a class of *poor* white people, living in a semi-barbarous state, in mean and miserable huts, no better than wigwams, supporting themselves by hunting, fishing, thieving, and working a little in harvest time; so ignorant as to be unable to read, and so degraded as to be despised and contemned even by the negro slaves. Their condition touched my heart, and weighed upon my mind. I spoke of it—when, and where, and how, and to whom, the Spirit dictated. I obeyed my inspirations, nothing more! My daily life brought me into close and favorable relations with the country people. I often, when I least expected it, found myself in the position of nurse, friend, sympathiser, and even counsellor. What I had to say was spoken in homes where I had been useful, and so earned a hearing, or by the sick beds of convalescents, whom I had nursed back to life. And so, my words were listened to with great kindness and indulgence, and, after much perseverance on my part, with effect."

"I do not wonder, Miss Mayfield, at your power over minds and hearts."

They had now reached the verge of the forest, and came out into the open country that lay between that and the coast.

And here their roads naturally separated—Old Field Cottage standing about a quarter of a mile up, and Dell-Delight four or five miles down the bay.

And here Marian gayly bade him good evening, and turned her horse's head

Thurston hesitated—he wished to ask permission to attend her home, but durst not; he returned her parting salutation with a smile and a deep bow, and passed on his way.

Marian, in a few minutes, reached Old Field Cottage, where Mrs. Shields and Miriam were waiting tea, and they noticed the new life in Marian's countenance, that flushed her cheeks with a higher crimson, and seemed to fill out and lift with light her wide and snowy eyelids.

And an hour's slow ride brought Thurston to Dell-Delight. That evening he had little patience with his miserly grandfather's "poor Richard" prosing, or with hapless Fanny's snatches of song and poesy—until,

"You're in love!" said the latter, suddenly ceasing her play, and coming and peering in his face.

"Yes," he said, blushing with consciousness, "I am in love with *you*, belle Fannie, 'will you live with me and be my love?'"

"Nay," said the maniac, breaking into song—

"My heart is in the dark grave,
My heart is not here—
My heart is in the damp grave,
Interred with my dear!"

He wished to escape; to get away from all company, to lay his head upon his pillow in the darkness of his own chamber, where, with the world shut out, he might live over again in memory, the scene just passed with Marian; and in imagination, many, many charming scenes of their future lives. I am afraid that night not many thoughts were given to the cause of humanity at large. A restless, passion-troubled, half blissful, half painful night he passed. Her eyes! her smile! every time they rose before his mind's eye, thrilled him as intensely as at first.

He arose on Monday morning unrefreshed, devising ways and means by which he might see Marian during the day. No better way occurred to him, than to go into the woods, bag a brace of partridges or rabbits, carry them *past* Old Field Cottage and drop in, impromptu-like, and make a present of the game to Edith, with the chance of being invited to breakfast.

Forthwith he put this plan in execution.

But though he stayed and stayed—and breakfast was prepared and eaten, and the service cleared away—and his excuse for staying ceased, and his continued presence seemed like intrusion, still the object of his visit was not obtained—beautiful Marian did not appear.

' I hope Miss Mayfield is quite well," he said, at last, as reluctantly he arose to go.

"Oh, yes, quite well, Marian is never otherwise, but she went last night to sit up with a sick neighbor, and I scarcely expect to see her home to-day."

This was a heart-sickening disappointment—especially as he felt that this *game* manœuvre could not be resorted to again—its air of *incidentality* would thus be lost. And he knew that Old Field Cottage was a place at once so well known, and so little frequented, that his visits there, upon *any* pretext, would, in that gossipping neighborhood, occasion remarks and speculations that would assuredly be carried to the knowledge of his jealous, watchful, argus-eyed grandfather, and be likely—not only to interfere with even his *accidental interviews* with the beautiful, penniless girl, but also very seriously with his future prospects.

He bade adieu to Edith, with an anxious heart and a busy brain, all alive with eagerness to contrive *accidental* meetings with Marian.

But though fertile in expedients, he was not fortunate in results.

It was in vain that he frequented B—— and C——, and the roads between those villages and Old Field Cottage. He never, by any chance, caught sight of Marian.

And so, in fruitless and disheartening endeavor, the week passed away.

However he was reasonably sure of seeing her at church, on Sunday; and so, for the first time in his life, he hailed the approaching Sabbath with joy!

CHAPTER XXIV.

LOVE.

> "All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
> Whatever stir this mortal frame
> Are but the ministers of love,
> And feed his sacred flame."—*Coleridge.*

THURSTON WILLCOXEN's usual road from Dell-Delight to the village church, brought him nowhere within miles of Marian Mayfield's forest path from Old Field Cottage to the same point.

But upon this particular Sunday, Thurston chose to make an early start from home, and ride full five miles up the shore to the cross roads, on the edge of the forest, where he had parted from Marian the Sabbath previous.

He reached the spot while the early autumnal frost yet embossed the earth and the trees with pearls—and the latest lingering summer birds twittered their morning carols.

It was but nine o'clock when he entered the forest—it was but an hour's ride to church, and he fully believed himself to be a half or three-quarters of an hour in advance of the young girl. Therefore he rode slowly up and down the forest path, frequently turning upon his course, until about thirty minutes had passed. Then he began to grow vigilant in eye and ear to catch the sight or sound of her distant approach. But nothing was heard save the twitter of the robins, the gurgle of low rills, the rustle of dried leaves driven by the breeze, or the fall of a solitary nut as it dropped to the ground, besides the lonely step of his own steed. And he might have paced to and fro for a whole day, for many days, and heard no other sound but these, or the wind and the rain—so lonely was this forest walk. Three quarters of an hour passed, and he began to grow very impatient, and wonder at her non-appearance, and the longer the delayed appearing, the surer he grew of seeing her the very next instant—it must be so, for Marian was never absent from church, and never late in attendance, and she never went by any other road than this--therefore, of course, she must now suddenly come in sight.

She came not, however. And vexed and sick at heart with frequent disappointments, Thurston galloped back on his road quite to the verge of the forest, and looked upon the country and the heaving sea, now all glorious in the morning light, and his eye roved for miles up and down the coast, but no human being or even beast of burden was in sight upon the lonely scene. The only sign of human habitation, in fact, was "the smoke that so gracefully curled" from the grove of trees that surrounded Old Field Cottage in the far distance.

Half-past ten o'clock! He now knew that Marian would not come. What could be the reason? Was she sick? No! Marian was *never* sick!

Suddenly it occurred to him that she must have stayed the whole week at the house of the neighbor whom she went to nurse. That would also account for his missing her all the week. And doubtless from that neighbor's house she had gone to church by another road.

No sooner had this explanation of her non-appearance occurred to him than he turned and spurred on his horse towards the church, hoping to see her there. He knew that he should be very late, but that would be nothing, if only he could see that one longed-for face.

He galloped on at the top of his speed and reached the village, and entered the church just before the preacher took his text.

He did not hear the text—his whole attention was fixed upon Marian. Yes! there she sat! With her beautiful blooming face turned up towards the preacher, in devout attention and seeming unconsciousness of the presence of another soul in the church

The sermon proceeded, and not one moment did her attention wander, and not one word of the discourse did Thurston hear, his eyes, his thoughts being completely occupied by the beautiful object of his love.

The sermon came to an end—the closing prayer, the hymn and the benediction followed, and the congregation began to disperse, and pour down the aisles.

Marian was taken up and whirled away from him in the crowd.

He could not, without rudeness, elbow his way among a mass made up so largely of women and children, and so he had to wait his time and follow on slowly in the rear.

He got out and reached the open churchyard and the fresh air.

But then he had the mortification of seeing Marian placed in her saddle by a very handsome young man, who instantly threw himself into another saddle, and rode on to attend her.

Devouring his own heart in chagrin, Thurston stood looking after them as they rode on towards the forest path; one minute swearing mentally that he did not care a cent to make a *third* in such a party, and the next feeling the dog-in-the-manger impulse, since he himself could not woo, to mar the wooing of another. But then how could he, without worse than Vandalic barbarism, force himself into their company? Well, at any rate, he would, he resolved, ride down that path, and bow to them as he passed. He could tell, by their faces, he thought, what the meaning of the *escort* might be. *That* he had a right to do—a right that could be exercised with perfect propriety.

No sooner thought of than done.

He sprung into his saddle and galloped after them. He overtook them a short distance in the forest. One keen glance in passing he shot into their faces; the countenance of the young man was flushed, eager, impassionate, and bent towards Marian. The expression of the young girl was blushing, downcast, distressed, embarrassed. Those mutual looks set Thurston's blood boiling with jealousy. He could have hurled his rival from the saddle, and trampled him under foot! It was with the greatest difficulty that he could restrain his passion and govern himself. But he did so—effectually, bowing haughtily as he passed them.

But Marian's voice recalled him.

"Mr. Willcoxen."

He turned around and looked.

Marian's face was full of blushing embarrassment and bashful entreaty—her companion's was clouded with disappointment and vexation.

Thurston rode back.

"Well, Miss Mayfield, I am at your orders."

"I have a number of things to say to you, Mr. Willcoxen, and a number of questions to ask. But first, you are acquainted with Mr Barnwell?"

"Yes," bowing coldly.

"Ride near, then."

Thurston now smiled, and went on the right side of Marian, where he continued to ride, in silence, waiting for the young girl to speak. But Marian either had forgotten what she wished to say, or else was taking a long time to arrange it.

They rode on in moody silence until they reached a gate, which Thurston opened for Marian to pass through.

Here Mr. Barnwell suddenly stopped, lifted his hat, and saying, gloomily and angrily, that he feared he had trespassed too long upon Miss Mayfield's society and indulgence, begged leave to apologize for his intrusion, and to wish her a very good morning. And so saying, he bowed, turned, and rode back to the village.

When they were left alone, the embarrassment on either side increased.

"You were very early at church to-day, Miss Mayfield," said Thurston, by way of saying something.

"Yes," smiled Marian, "but I could not well be otherwise than early, since I was there from eight o'clock in the morning."

"So soon!"

"You know—or perhaps you do not know that I have a class in the Sunday school."

"Idiot that I was to forget that!" thought Thurston, as the sudden light broke on him, showing that while he was cooling his feet and warming his temper by pacing up and down St. Mary's forest, in expectation of seeing her, she was already safely housed with her class in the Sunday school. No matter! He secretly swore to be more alert on the next Sabbath morning.

"But I cannot compliment *you* upon the same ground, Mr. Willcoxen," said Marian, both gravely and sweetly; "you were *late* at Divine service."

A thrill of delight electrified Thurston's nerves. He was "late"—*she* had noticed it—*she*, whose attention seldom wandered from her prayer-book or her minister's face—she had noticed his absence—she had waited for his appearance, perhaps impatiently, longingly as *he* had waited for *her* in the woods. So with love's sophistry he reasoned as he heard her words, and an impetuous tide of emotion rushed through all his veins and flushed his face! Forgetting his discreet caution, forgetting that their meetings were to seem incidental—or not caring to use that subterfuge with her alone—losing his usual self-possession, he pressed towards her, exclaiming, passionately, and half reproachfully,

"Marian, I have much to say to you—I have lived over many times the scene of last Sabbath evening. I have sought you everywhere, during the whole week, with no other result than heart-sickening disappointment from day to day! Marian, why did you inspire and then avoid me?"

Surprised at his *words*, and confused by his manner, Marian averted her eyes, as a vivid blush rose mantling cheek and brow.

"I have offended you," said the young man, sorrowfully.

"No," said the maiden, "only astonished me."

"Wherefore, Marian? wherefore? That I should have sought you again with my whole heart and soul in the search?" he asked earnestly, ardently—pressing towards her. Her spirited little horse shied angrily, throwing up its head. She became more and more confused and embarrassed. Her face was still averted—and the blush burned like fire on her cheek.

"Marian," he said, dropping his voice to the very depths of tenderness; "Marian, give me your hand, in token of forgiveness. I know that I have been rash and presumptuous; that I have no right so suddenly to speak of feelings that have not, however, *arisen* suddenly, fairest girl, but have had possession of my whole nature, heart, soul and spirit, for months past—that have filled and fired and consumed me—like a fever or a madness! Forgive me, Marian; I will control myself—I will not shock or wound you again—give me your hand in token of pardon, and tell me you will not avoid me."

With her face still averted, and her cheek still burning, the maiden held out her hand, saying softly,

"I was not offended, as I told you before, only surprised that you should have imagined I had avoided you; when there was no earthly reason to do so, that I know of."

He carried her hand respectfully to his lips. He felt the unintentional reproach of her candor and honesty. He covered his feelings of compunction by saying,

"Strange—most strange, that I could not find you, when I sought you so eagerly."

"I was at home all the week," said Marian, "except on Monday."

"I called at Old Field Cottage upon that very day, unfortunately."

"So Edith told me, but she did not tell me that the visit was to me—she thought your coming partly accidental."

"Well," said Thurston, as a blush of honest shame mantled his brow—"it was partly so—I had been out shooting, and passing close to Old Field Cottage, saw Mrs. Shields at the door—thought my morning's spoils might not be unacceptable, and tired and hungry, accepted her invitation to breakfast. Still, Marian, still the strongest feeling in my heart on entering, was the hope of seeing you. The consequent disappointment was very grievous to be borne, followed as it was by daily and heart-sickening failures. Marian?" he suddenly said, changing his manner, and leaning towards her.

Her skittish little horse shied again. She withdrew her hand and turned away her head, though without anger.

"Let us speak," she said, "of the subject we were discussing last Sabbath evening."

"As you will, fairest Marian; I have already taken some steps towards entering upon your service, my liege lady," he answered, with a manner perfectly respectful, but so pointed that the maiden, dropping her eyes, said—

"Not *my* humble service, good sir, but the higher one of your fellow citizens." There was a pause.

"You do not ask me, Marian, what these first steps have been. You are perhaps no longer interested in them."

"It is not considered polite to ask questions," said Marian, archly; "nevertheless, I am waiting anxiously to hear."

"It is not much that I have accomplished. When one feels within oneself, inspirations and energies capable of accomplishing great things, it is disheartening to see what poor tools we have to work with, and what poor materials to operate upon—with what small, slow steps we approach our object."

"The river is filled from small springs, and the mountain grows by accretion. All reforms have started with one man, and its victories have been single converts, few and far between."

How difficult to gaze upon the beautiful, eloquent face, the clear, blue eye, soft with feeling and radiant with light, the roseate cheek and sunny, rippling hair, the glowing lips, smiling and speaking; and not bow down before her beauty; and not give utterance to the passion, throbbing, burning in his bosom! How hard to keep down the rising heart! How hard to ride and talk of social ethics when he only wished to fold that glowing form to his bosom! He did not care a farthing for her young inspired wisdom; he adored her enchanting beauty, not thinking that that beauty owed its greatest fascination to the informing spirit within.

He grew impatient of their mode of travelling—those shying horses—the detestable beasts kept them so far apart. He wished that the fair girl and himself had been only walking, or sitting down somewhere on some bank or fallen tree. He longed to throw himself at her feet, to clasp her hands, to pour out before her the flood of passion that was swelling in his bosom! To entreat her to forget her wisdom, and her philosophy, and influence, and to remember that she was a beautiful girl, the most charming and the most beloved in the world, and to beseech her to hear him, to bless him, to let him lead her into the Eden of love. Gazing on her enchanting beauty, he was, in imagination, far away in that Eden already.

She recalled him, her calm, sweet voice coming coolly across all that heat and turbulence of passion and imagination.

"You have not yet told me, Mr. Willcoxen, of the nature of the steps you have taken towards a commencement."

Thurston frowned and smiled slightly as he said,

"They are so trifling, so inefficient, that I hesitate to tell you."

"They may seem trifling, but of their efficiency we must take time to judge."

"Well, you shall hear, and then you shall judge," said Thurston, guarding his offending glances as well as he could. "I have offered myself to the Board of Directors to give a free course of lectures at C—— Academy. A lecture is to be delivered every Monday evening, and the lecture room to be thrown open to the public. The course will embrace a review of history, political economy, social philosophy, education, the progress of society, and lastly a comparative view of the present state of civilized nations."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Marian, smiling upon him. "And you call this trivial? Pray, sir, were you thinking of doing something superhuman, that you depreciate *this?*"

Thurston gayly answered her smile, and then said,

"I have sketched out quite a wide field of labor, which will take me the whole winter to cover; but my doubt is, whether I can do anything like justice to the subjects, or whether, if I do, I shall find any sort of favor with my audience, or any sort of good fruits will come of the seed thus sown."

"'Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we might attain, by fearing the attempt,'" quoted Marian. Then she added, "Your plan is very good—your course, if you do it justice, will be a complete course of instruction and enlightenment for these people; and under one or another of your heads, you can speak any new thought, teach any new truth, that you please to utter, or they need to hear. But when do these lectures begin?"

"To-morrow evening the introductory discourse, a retrospect of history, is to be delivered. If you had been anywhere else than shut up in Old Field Cottage, you would have seen the affair announced. And yet, fair inspirer! so debarred have I been from your presence, and so anxious have I felt to find you, that not one preparatory note have I made for that lecture to be given to-morrow."

"No matter," said Marian, "if you have thought and felt a great deal in your life—if you have a warm heart and an active brain, 'it will be given you in that hour what to say.'"

"Be you only there, beautiful Marian—be you only there before me, with your eloquent face, that I may draw strength and fire from those inspiring eyes, and I shall not fail. I shall be, at best, your medium, Marian, and if your spirit speaks by my lips, I shall not fail to speak 'as man never spake,' save one!" said Thurston, with enthusiasm, pressing towards her.

But her willful and spirited pony threw up its elegant little head, and shying aside, trotted on before. Marian's face, too, was averted, and her cheeks dyed with blushes, and her eyes fixed upon the path before her.

Thurston did not curse the wanton little beastie, any more than he did its mistress; but he mentally swore that wooing a maiden on horseback, was to a lover the most exasperating manner of courtship on earth.

"I wish to Heaven she had to walk to and from church," was his charitable aspiration as he overtook her.

Marian saw the chagrin of his countenance; and she said, though with her flushed cheek still averted, "I shall not fail to be present at your lecture; not certainly in the vain hope of being able to give you countenance, but for the pleasure it will give me to hear you."

"Not give me countenance!" he exclaimed, vehemently; "I tell you, fair Marian, that your clear eyes, for me, *radiate* inspiration, power."

"Pray, do not say such things to me," said the maiden, veiling her eyes with their pure white lids; "believe me, flattery is always *most* distasteful from one whom we *wish* to esteem."

"Flattery! Good Heaven, Marian! I *cannot* flatter you! Words are too *worn* and *weak*, to express the truth of what you seem to me, much less to exceed it."

"Our roads separate here," said the young girl, as at that moment they emerged from the forest into the open country, that stretched to the bay in the distance.

"And *must* we part here, fair one?"

"I believe so, as our homes lie in opposite directions."

"Heaven grant that it may not *long* be so!" fervently ejaculated the young gentleman.

"Good day to you, Mr. Willcoxen," said the maiden, turning her pony's head.

"Stay, fairest Marian, one moment!"

She paused and looked around, while her little pony showed his disapprobation by pawing the ground, and champing the bit, and shaking and tossing his willful little head.

"Shall we not meet again this week?" he entreated.

"I shall be at the lecture, to-morrow evening."

"Heaven speed the hours! And *after that*, Marian?"

"Sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof?" she said softly, smiling and blushing, and veiling her eyes.

"Nay, now, do not tantalize me; how shall I see you this week as often as I wish to do so?" he pleaded, attempting to take her hand, a freedom that her capricious little pony would in nowise permit. "Tell me, fairest—tell me—how, and where, shall I be able to find you this week?"

"At home," said the young girl, with a slight surprise in her tone; "Edith will be glad to see her old school-mate, at the cottage."

"And you, dearest Marian?"

"I shall be very happy to see, and converse with one who has the heart to labor earnestly and gratuitously, in the cause of education and reform;" said the maiden, in a low, soft voice.

"Thank you, fairest and dearest; I shall find my way to Old Fields."

"Once more—good day, Mr. Willcoxen," she said—turning once again to ride homeward.

"'Good day'—good *night*, say rather—for my day star is about to set," said Thurston, gazing after her.

Then he called—

"Miss Mayfield!"

She looked back.

"Subjugate the willfulness of that wicked little beastie of yours."

Marian laughed.

"Good-bye, Mr. Willcoxen."

"Good-bye, till to-morrow, most beautiful Marian!" said Thurston, turning reluctuantly down the road that led to Dell-Delight, and thinking that *all* "delight" lay in the opposite direction.

Marian rode on—her countenance radiant with a new inspiring joy that seemed to elevate it into glorious supernal beauty. She rode on—the celestial smile still shining in her eyes, soon reached Old Field Cottage, where the neat table was set for dinner and Edith was awaiting her.

"Why, Marian," said Edith, as the blooming girl took her place at the table, "I am not used to paying compliments, but really you must have received a baptism of beauty! *living* beauty! I never saw a face so radiant!"

In the meanwhile Thurston quickened his horse's steps, and in half an hour reached Dell-Delight in good time for the miser's dinner.

"Humph! you're getting to be some sort of a saint here, lately, aren't you, young man? Quite regular in your attendance upon Divine Worship. Now holiness don't run in our family!"

"He's in love!" said Fanny.

"'From the glance of her eye
Shun danger and fly,
For fatal's the glance of Kate Kearney.'"

"*Kate Kearney?* Who is she? Who is she!" quickly questioned the little old man, piercing his keen little black eyes like needles into the eyes of the youth. "Some Irish beggar, whose blowzy face you have fallen in love with? Take care, my young ape! You know the terms, and you know me! I give no gold to gild love in a cottage! No, no! No, no! And you ought to know what love in a cottage means just hereabouts—a low hut, with a mud floor, clay and pitch walls, a leaking roof, a smoky hearth and nothing to cook on it, a wife starved into a lingering consumption, and ten children with bare legs, matted hair and dirty faces—who *don't* starve because it is a great deal more natural to steal!"

Thurston shuddered—then shook off the creepy feeling, and laughing, said,

"Believe me, sir, you may be at ease upon my account. I have no more taste for love in a cottage—than you have!"

"Don't believe him! He's in love!" said Fanny, exultingly.

"'Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
And men below and saints above,
For love is heaven, and heaven is love!'"

"Peace, you singing fool! I'll not be deceived, my young gentleman—I ask you again, who *is* Catherine Kearney, and where does she live?"

"'Oh, did you ne'er meet this Kate Kearney!
She lives on the banks of Killarny.
Beware of her smile—for many a wile
Lies hid in the smile of Kate Kearney!'"

"Silence, Fanny, I say. Now, sir, will you answer my question, Mr. Jackanapes?"

Thurston laughed.

"She has just told you, sir! The lady was a celebrated Irish beauty, who lived some years ago upon the shores of the lake of Killarny, and whom some rhyming fellow has made immortal."

"Humph! no one can tell when that singing idiot is chanting truth or falsehood."

"Pray, sir, leave poor Fanny in peace—don't scold her."

"Don't believe him! He's in love," said Fanny.

"'In peace love tunes the shepherd's reed,
In war he mounts the warrior's steed,
In halls in gay attire is seen,
In hamlets dances on the green.'"

"Aye! I shouldn't wonder the least if there was a petticoat in the case. Well! I have no objection, if it be heavily embossed with gold bullion! You know my conditions, Sir Dandy! She must be a six-figured heiress!"

"'And what is your *fortune*, my pretty maid?
And what is your fortune, my pretty maid?'
'My face is my fortune, sir,' she said,
'My face is my fortune, sir,' she said!"

sung Fanny, archly nodding her head, and changing her face and her tone to suit the two voices.

"Peace, idiot, I say! Eh! now, Thurston? You understand? A six-figured fortune! Though, where you are to find such an heiress. I don't know, unless you could take the little ape, Jacquelina, from Nace Grimshaw! Eh! you handsome dog?"

CHAPTER XXV.

FOREST WALKS.

> "—The still green places where they met
> The moonlit branches dewy wet,
> The greeting and the parting word,
> The smile, the embrace, the tone that made
> An Eden of the forest shade."—*Whittier.*

THE next evening the lecture-room at the academy was filled at a very early hour, by a crowd—the greater part of which, alas! were drawn thither, not so much from the desire of intellectual gratification, as from the idleness and vain curiosity that would have led them to prefer a traveling circus as an evening entertainment, had such a thing stopped at their village.

Marian was present, under the care of Colonel Thornton. She was very simply dressed, as usual, and seated near the centre of the assembly—where, nevertheless, her beauty shone, fair as the moon from the clouds.

And the young lecturer, to whom her clear eyes were often raised in hope and expectancy? Thurston Willcoxen was one upon whom Nature had lavished all her rarest gifts of mental and personal beauty and grace. And never had he appeared so fascinating as this evening, when commencing his discourse in a quiet, modest manner, and gradually warming with his subject, his fine face grew radiant with spirit-light, and eloquence glowed like fire on his lips.

Many a young maiden's heart throbbed under that soul-lit eye and soul-thrilling tone.

And Marian, his own beloved, recognized a heart and brain and spirit, higher, greater than her own—recognized them without jealousy, without a single wish to rival or excel them—recognized them with a woman's fervent, cordial, enthusiastic, whole-souled homage.

Ah! beautiful Marian! greatness of heart and brain and spirit are not enough! Satan was great in these things—great in the passions of his soul, the power of his intellect, and the infinity of his spirit!—yet he fell!

One single comprehensive grace is worth them all! A slave may have it—the conqueror of the world may lack it! It is the child's simplest gift—it is the hero's crowning glory!

The lecturer ceased. The impression that he made was deep and lasting.

As he descended from the stand, friends and acquaintances crowded around him with congratulations. He received and acknowledged them all with graceful courtesies, but his eyes wandering, sought her for whom he had taken all this trouble. And espying her at last, quietly waiting in the centre of the crowd, he escaped as soon as he could, and made his way towards her.

She met him. He took her hand within his own, deferentially pressed it, and seeking to meet her eyes, deprecatingly whispered his doubts whether his effort that evening had met her approbation.

"It would be presumptuous in me to praise it!" she answered fervently, with a pressure of his hand, and a glance into his eyes, that sent an electric shock of joy through every nerve and vein to his heart's core.

"Marian! If you are disengaged, and will be at home to-morrow, I will call at your house in the morning."

"I will wait you there, and until then, good-bye," she said, smiling.

"Good night, my day-star! I shall dream of you till then!" he murmured, in a tone audible only to her, as he gave her back in charge of her deaf, poor, blind, old escort.

The next morning, when the red, autumnal sun was but an hour or two above the horizon, and the pearly frost still lay on the brown and burnished meadow lands, Thurston rode from Dell-Delight to Old Field Cottage.

When he reached the little arched gate, over which the lovely azure morning-glories bloomed amid the frost, he alighted, tied his horse, and passed up the little flower-bordered walk to the door, and rapped.

It was opened by Marian, who, the first instant she saw him, colored vividly, and the next smiled and invited him to enter.

There never was such a home-like little palace as that cottage parlor. It was so clean and quiet, the hearth was so bright, and the fire so clear, and the outlook from the windows so free and wide!

Edith was sitting by the back window making a child's apron.

She arose and greeted her visitor, handed him a chair to the fire, and resumed her seat and occupation.

Marian took up a little crimson hood that she was quilting, and with a smiling reference to the lecture of the preceding evening, sat down and pursued her work.

The quiet, domestic air of the little place soon influenced him, and he speedily felt at home, and chatted freely and gayly with the two young women.

Marian told him that his friend and admirer, aunt Jenny, had taken little Miriam and gone into the woods to gather walnuts, a thing which she did every fine morning, in order to amass a Christmas hoard; but that she would be very much disappointed and grieved at having missed him.

After prolonging his call as far as good manners would sanction, Thurston arose and took a reluctant leave.

Marian attended him to the gate.

"Marian," he said, lingering before he mounted his horse, "there does not bloom a flower at Dell-Delight!"

She smiled, and gathered a rich scented white tea-rose and handed him. He touched it lightly with his lips, sprang into his saddle, bowed deeply and rode off. And Marian returned to her quilting, humming a song as she sewed.

The visit had been very pleasant, yet not altogether satisfactory to Thurston. It was very tantalizing to sit there and see and speak to his beloved only in the presence of Edith. In fact, so unsatisfying had been this call, that he had little desire frequently to repeat it, even had such a course been prudent

Though the few days were helped onward by his preparation of the second discourse with which he secretly hoped to please her even more than he had done with the first one, and though his labor was lightened by anticipation of the Sunday's meeting, and the Monday's lecture, yet the time lagged heavily. He counted the days and the hours. He had no hope of seeing her before the Sabbath. What then was his surprise and joy when riding through the forest on Friday morning, to meet Marian returning from the village and on foot. She was radiant with health and beauty, and blushing and smiling with joy, as she met him. A little basket hung upon her arm. To dismount and join her, to take the basket from her arm, and look in her face and declare in broken exclamations his delight at seeing her, were the words and the work of an instant.

"And whither away, this morning, fairest Marian?" he inquired, when unrebuked he had pressed her hand to his lips, and drawn it through his arm.

"I have been to the village, and am now going home," said the maiden.

"It is a long walk through the forest."

"Yes, but—my pony has cast a shoe and lamed himself slightly, and I fear I shall have to dispense with his services for a few days!"

"Thank God!" fervently ejaculated Thurston to himself.

"But it is beautiful weather, and I enjoy walking," said the young girl.

"Marian—dearest Marian, will you let me attend you home! The walk is lonely, and it may not be quite safe for a fair woman to take it unattended."

"I have no fears of interruption," said Marian.

"Yet, you will not refuse to let me attend you? *Do not*, Marian!" he pleaded, earnestly, fervently, clasping her hand, and pouring the whole strength of his soul in the gaze that he fastened on her face.

"I thank you—but you were riding the other way."

"It was merely an idle saunter, to help to kill the time be tween this and Sunday, dearest girl! Now rest you, my queen—my queen! upon this mossy rock, as on a throne, while I ride forward and leave my horse. I will be with you again in fifteen minutes; in the meantime here is something for you to look at," he said, drawing from his pocket an elegant little volume bound in purple and gold, and laying it in her lap. He then smiled, sprang into his saddle, bowed, and galloped away—leaving Marian to examine her book. It was a London copy of Spenser's Fairy Queen, superbly illustrated; one of the rarest books to be found in the whole country, at that day. On the fly-leaf, the name of Marian was written, in the hand of Thurston.

Some minutes passed in the pleasing examination of the volume—and Marian was still turning the leaves with unmixed pleasure—pleasure in the gift, and pleasure in the giver—when Thurston, even before the appointed time, suddenly rejoined her.

"So absorbed in Spenser, that you did not even hear or see me!" said the young man, half reproachfully.

"I was indeed far gone in Fairy Land! Oh! I thank you so much for your beautiful present. It is, indeed, a treasure. I shall prize it greatly," said Marian, in unfeigned delight.

"Do you know that Fairy Land is not obsolete, dearest Marian?" he said, fixing his eyes upon her charming face, with an ardor and earnestness that caused hers to sink.

"Come," she said, in a low voice—and rising from the rock—"let us leave this place and go forward."

They walked on, speaking softly of many things, of the lectures, of the beautiful autumnal weather, of Spenser, of anything except the one interest that now occupied both hearts. The fear of startling her bashful trust, and banishing those bewitching glances that sometimes lightened on his face, made him cautious, and restrained his eagerness; while excessive consciousness kept her cheeks dyed with blushes, and her nerves vibrating sweet, wild music, like the strings of some æolian harp when swept by the swift south wind.

He determined, during the walk, to plead his love, and ascertain its fate. Aye! but how approach the subject, when, at every ardent glance or tone, her face, her heart, shrunk and closed up, like the leaves of the sensitive plant.

So they rambled on, discovering new beauties in nature; now it would be merely an oak leaf of rare richness of coloring; now some tiny insect with finished elegance of form; now a piece of the dried branch of a tree that Thurston picked up, to bid her note the delicately blending shades in its gray hue, or the curves and lines of grace in its twisted form—the beauty of its slow return to dust; and now perhaps it would be the mingled colors in the heaps of dried leaves drifted at the foot of some great tree.

And then from the minute loveliness of nature's sweet, small things, their eyes would wander to the great glory of the autumnal sky, or the variegated array of the gorgeous forest.

Thurston knew a beautiful glade, not far distant, to the left of their path, from which there was a very fine view that he wished to show his companion. And he led Marian thither by a little moss bordered, descending path.

It was a natural opening in the forest, from which, down a still, descending vista, between the trees, could be seen the distant bay, and the open country near it, all glowing under a refulgent sky, and hazy with the golden mist of Indian Summer. Before them the upper branches of the nearest trees formed a natural arch above the picture.

Marian stood and gazed upon the wondrous beauty of the scene with soft, steady eyes, with lips breathlessly severed, in perfect silence and growing emotion.

"This pleases you," said Thurston.

She nodded, without removing her gaze.

"You find it charming?"

She nodded again, and smiled.

"You were never here before."

"Never."

"Marian, you are a lover of nature."

"I do not know," she said, softly, "whether it be love, or worship, or both; but *some* pictures spell-bind me I stand amidst a scene like this enchanted, until my soul has absorbed as much of its beauty and glory and wisdom as it can give. As the Ancient Mariner held with his 'glittering eye' the wedding guest, so such a picture holds me enthralled until I have heard the story and learned the lesson it has to tell and teach me! Did you ever, in the midst of nature's liberal ministrations, feel your spirit absorbing, assimilating, growing? or is it only a fantastic notion of mine that beauty is the food of soul?"

She turned her eloquent eyes full upon him.

He forgot his prudence, forgot her claims, forgot everything, and caught and strained her to his bosom, pressing passionate kisses upon her lips, and the next instant he was kneeling at her feet, imploring her to forgive him—to hear him!

Marian stood with her face bowed and hidden in her hands, but above the tips of her fingers, her forehead, *crimsoned*, might be seen. One half her auburn hair had escaped and rippled down upon her bosom in glittering disorder. And so she stood a few moments. But soon, removing her hands and turning away, she said, in a troubled tone,

"Rise. Never kneel to any creature—that homage is due the Creator alone—oh! rise."

"First pardon me, first hear me, beloved girl."

"Oh! rise—rise, I beg you. I cannot bear to see a man on his knee, except in prayer to God," she said, walking away.

He sprang up and followed her, took her hand, and with gentle compulsion, made her sit down upon a bank, and then he sank beside her, exclaiming eagerly, vehemently, yet in a low, half smothered tone,

"Marian, I love you. I never spoke these words to woman before; for I never loved before. Marian, the first moment that I saw you I loved you, without knowing what new life it was that had kindled in my nature. I have loved more and more every day! I love you more than words can tell or heart conceive! I only live in your presence—Marian! not one word or glance for me? Oh! speak—turn your dear face towards me," he said, putting his hand gently around her head, "speak to me, Marian, for I adore, I worship you."

"I do not deserve to be loved in that way, I do not wish it, for it is wrong—idolatrous," she said, in a low, trembling voice.

"Oh, *what* do you mean! Is the love upon which my life seems to hang so offensive to you? Say, Marian! Oh! you are compassionate by nature—how *can* you keep me in the torture of suspense?"

"I do not keep you so."

"You will let me love you?"

Marian slipped her hand in his—that was her reply.

"You will love me?"

For all answer she gently pressed his fingers. He pressed her hand to his heart—to his lips—covering it with kisses.

"Yet, oh! speak to me, dearest; let me hear from you lips that you love me—a little—but better than I deserve. Will you? Say, Marian. Speak, dearest girl."

"I cannot tell you now," she said, in a low, thrilling tone. "I am disturbed—wish to grow quiet—and must go home. Let us return."

One more passionate kiss of the hand he clasped, and then he helped her to her feet, drew her arm within his own, and led her up the moss-covered rocks that formed the natural steps of the ascent that led to the homeward path.

They were now near the verge of the forest, which, when they reached, Marian drew her arm from his, and extending her hand, said,

"This is the place our roads part."

"But you will let me attend you home?"

"No—it would make the return walk too long."

"That can be no consideration. I beg you will let me go with you, Marian."

"No—it would not be convenient to Edith to-day," said Marian, quickly drawing her hand from his detaining grasp, waving him adieu, and walking swiftly away across the meadow.

Thurston gazed after her; strongly tempted to follow her;

yet withal admitting that it was best that she had declined his escort to the cottage; and thanking Heaven that the opportunity would again be afforded to take an "incidental" stroll with her, as she should walk to church on Sunday morning; and so forming the resolution to haunt the forest-path from seven o'clock that next Sabbath morning until he should see her, Thurston hurried home.

And how was it with Marian? She hastened to the cottage, laid off her bonnet and shawl, and set herself at work as diligently as usual; but a higher bloom glowed on her cheek, a softer, brighter light beamed in her eye, a warmer, sweeter smile hovered around her lips, a deeper, richer tone thrilled in her voice. "A dream was on her soul." A feeling of infinite content—a sense of being *at home on this earth*—of being *satisfied*—of being *at rest*—such as she had never felt since in childhood she had reposed on her mother's bosom. She felt herself no longer as before, a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth, (going about doing good, loving all, it was true, but,) unloved of any. She was no longer *alone*—she was *beloved*—she had heard it; she felt it; she knew it! Not words alone had told her so—those thrilling arms that had clasped her form—most earnest and truthful even in their rashness—and quivering with great emotion even in their strength; that heart that had throbbed so wildly against her own; those eyes that had gazed so fondly, passionately, *prayerfully* in hers, pleading for her love; all these eloquent exponents had impressed and filled her soul with the blessed truth that she was beloved—beloved to her heart's infinite content—beloved by one around whom—softly be it whispered—her own maiden fancies had hovered in pure enthusiasm, ever since the morning upon which she had seen him before Old Field Cottage, and had heard from the mouths of others the relation of his noble and generous deeds—the high eulogium of his exalted character. He might not have merited such unqualified encomium—but with her it stood as truth. And up to the time of his first meeting with Marian, Thurston Willcoxen in thought and deed had been perfectly blameless. His praises were still the theme of the aged as well as the youthful. In the wealth of golden opinions he was fully Marian's equal.

On Sunday morning the lovers "chanced" to meet again—for so Thurston would still have had it appear as he permitted Marian to overtake him in the forest on her way to the Sunday-school.

She was blooming and beautiful as the morning itself as she approached. He turned with a radiant smile to greet her.

"Welcome! thrice welcome, dearest one! your coming is more joyous than that of day. Welcome my own, dear Marian! *May* I now call you mine! Have I read that angel-smile aright? Is it the blessed herald of a happy answer to my prayer?" he whispered, as he took her hand and passed his arm around her head, and brought it down upon his bosom. "Speak, my Marian! Speak, my beloved! Are you my own, as I am yours?"

Her answer was so low-toned that he had to bend his head down close to her lips to hear her murmur—

"I love you dearly. But I love too well to ruin your prospects. You must not bind yourself to me just yet, dear Thurston," and meekly and gently she sought to slip from his embrace.

But he slid his arm around her lightly, bending his head and whispering eagerly,

"What mean you, Marian? Your words are incomprehensible."

"Dear Thurston," she answered, in a tremulous and thrilling voice; "I have known your grandfather long by report, and I am well aware of his character and disposition and habits. But only yesterday I chanced to learn from one who was well informed, that old Mr. Willcoxen had sworn to make you his heir only upon condition of your finding a bride of equal or superior fortunes. If now you were to engage yourself to me, your grandfather would disinherit you. I love you too well," she murmured very low, "to ruin your fortunes. You must not bind yourself to me just now, Thurston."

And this loving, frank, and generous creature was the woman, he thought, whose good name he would have periled in a clandestine courtship, in preference to losing his inheritance by an open betrothal. A stab of compunction pierced his bosom; he felt that he loved her more than ever, but passion was stronger than affection, stronger than conscience, stronger than anything in nature, except pride and ambition. He tightened his clasp about her waist—he bent and whispered,

"Beloved Marian, is it to bind *me only* that you hesitate?"

"Only that," she answered softly.

"Now hear *me*, Marian. I swear before Heaven, and in thy sight—that—as I have never loved woman before you—that—as I love you only of all women—I will be faithful to you while I live upon this earth! as your husband, if you will accept me; as your exclusive lover whether you will or not! I hold myself pledged to you as long as we both shall live! There, Marian! I am bound to you as tight as vows can bind! I am pledged to you whether you accept my pledge or not. You cannot even release, for I am pledged to Heaven as well. There, Marian, you see I am bound, while you only are free. Come! be generous! You have said that you loved me! pledge yourself to me in like manner. We are both young, dear Marian, and we can wait. Only let me have your promise to be my wife—only let me have that blessed assurance for the future, and I can endure the present. Speak, dear Marian."

"Your grandfather—"

"He has no grudge against you, personally, sweet girl; he knows nothing, suspects nothing of my preferences — how should he? No, dearest girl—his notion that I must have a monied bride, is the merest whim of dotage; we must forgive the whims of ninety-five. That great age also augurs for us a short engagement, and a speedy union!"

"Oh! never let us dream of that! It would be sinful, and draw down upon us the displeasure of Heaven. Long may the old man yet live to prepare for a better life.

"Amen; so be it; God forbid that I should grudge the aged patriarch his few remaining days upon earth—days, too, upon which his soul's immortal welfare may depend," said Thurston "But, dearest girl, it is more difficult to get a reply from you, than from a prime minister. Answer, now, once for all, sweet girl! since I am forever bound to you; will you pledge yourself to become my own dear wife?"

"Yes," whispered Marian, very lowly.

"And will you," he asked, gathering her form closer to his bosom, "will you redeem that pledge when I demand it?"

"Yes," she murmured sweetly, "so that it is not to harm you, or bring you into trouble or poverty; for that I would not consent to do!"

"God bless you; you are an angel! Oh! Marian! I find it in my heart to sigh because I am so unworthy of you!"

And this was spoken most sincerely.

You think too well of me. I fear—I fear for the consequences."

"Why, dearest Marian?"

"Oh, I fear that when you know me better you may love me less," she answered, in a trembling voice.

"Why should I?"

"Oh! because your love may have been attracted by ideal qualities, with which you yourself have invested me; and when your eyes are opened you may love me less."

"May my soul forever perish the day that I cease to love you!" said Thurston, passionately pressing her to his heart, and sealing his fearful oath upon her pure brow and guileless lips. And now, beloved! this compact is sealed! Our fates are united forever! Henceforth nothing shall dissever us!"

They were now drawing near the village.

Marian suddenly stopped.

"Dear Thurston," she said, "if you are seen waiting upon me to church, do you know what the people will say? They will say that Marian has a new admirer in Mr. Willcoxen—and that will reach your grandfather's ears, and give you trouble."

"And wherefore should we care? I should be a wretch

Marian," he said, with a sense of bitter self-scorning—"I should be a wretch to weigh your claims in the scale with my interest with that old man!"

"It is *I* who weigh them for you," said Marian; "I am resolved that you shall not risk your interest for my sake."

"Nay, I will lay them at your feet or lose them altogether for you!"

"A truce to vain words, dear Thurston. I myself, then, if I must say it, prefer that there should be no ground for idle gossip about us. I confess, that I am very sensitive to those things—*so* sensitive, that had I known you would have been in the woods to-day, I should have taken some other road to church."

"You would?"

"Yes, indeed, I would!"

"*I shall remember that!*" thought he.

"I must hasten onward, to be in time for my class in the Sunday school. You have time to follow on at your leisure, since you have no duties awaiting you. Good-morning, dear Thurston."

"Stay! one moment, beautiful Marian! When shall we meet again?"

"When Heaven wills."

"And when will that be, fairest?"

"I do not know; but do not visit me at the cottage, dear Thurston, it would be indiscreet."

"Marian! I *must* see you often. Will you meet me on the beach to-morrow afternoon?"

Marian's eyes had been fixed upon the ground—she now raised them, and with an expression of surprise and trouble, looked in his face.

"Have you so misapprehended me!" she said, sadly. "Listen to me, dear Thurston. I have consented to this secret engagement because it appears to me, under the exceptional circumstances, to be at least not *wrong*. *I* have neither parent nor guardian, patron nor benefactor, to whom I might be supposed to owe the duty of obedience. I have no authority over me save that of God. And therefore I have the perfect right to do as I please, always supposing that I 'please to do right.' And as for yourself, you are of age, and should have the same freedom, under the same condition of right doing. Your grandfather's attempt to compel your choice of a wealthy bride before a loved one, I consider an unjustifiable stretch of authority. He has unfortunately the *legal power* of disinheriting you, though he certainly has not the *moral right* of doing so. The landed estate especially, which he inherited from his forefathers, he should transmit to his children—it is their right—it is *your* right. So I have considered this matter, dear Thurston, and therefore I have consented to this secret engagement; that you may not lose your inheritance, and may rest assured of the love of your betrothed, who will wait for you years if necessary. Dear Thurston, do you now understand the motives of my conduct? And do you see that I would do no wrong?"

"*Would* it be wrong to give a little of your company, in a seaside stroll, to me, to whom you have just plighted your faith?"

"Yes," said Marian, gravely, "it would be wrong."

"Which of the commandments of God, fair saint, would it break?"

"None, perhaps, from beginning to end, yet my conscience assures me that it would be wrong. 'All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient,' says St. Paul."

"Aye, beautiful theologian! but hear what Paul's Master said—'*Be not righteous over much.*' Now are you righteous over much?"

Thurston was certainly the best logician of the two, and Marian felt it. Yet tapping her hand upon her bosom thoughtfully she said:

"If there is any discrepancy between the teachings of Christ and His servant Paul, I have not observed it, and I do not believe it really to exist. I believe Christ would endorse the words of Paul, 'All things are lawful unto me, but all things edify not.' Now, dear Thurston, I do not think it would 'edify' the young girls of my Sunday school to discover that I held secret meetings, and took solitary strolls with a gentleman not known to be betrothed to me. And hear me farther, dearest Thurston, and do not look so displeased. It has pleased Heaven to make me useful in this neighborhood. And to lighten my labors and make them pleasant to me, nature has given me some love of approbation, and some general, social affections and enjoyments. And to increase my usefulness to His creatures, the Lord has caused me to find much favor in the sight of men. Now were I to take these lonely strolls with you, pleasant and harmless in themselves though they might be, I should endanger the confidence of the community in *me*, and my own usefulness to *them*. Therefore, dearest Thurston, though it would give me the sweetest pleasure to stroll with you on the sea-shore to-morrow evening, and frequently afterwards; yet I must not do so, neither to-morrow nor *ever*, until our engagement can be admitted."

Thurston looked deeply mortified and angry.

"When I heard you lauded to the very sky, I asked myself how was it possible that a human creature could be so faultless as you were represented. I find now that they were mistaken. You are not faultless; you have pride and worldliness! Yes, sweet saint! You love the good word of the world, as well as the most frivolous woman of society, or the most pharisaical priest of the synagogue!" he exclaimed, bitterly.

Marian paused in thought.

"It may be true," she answered, meekly; "no one ever told me so before; but it may be that I *do* set too high a value upon the opinion of society. If I do, God cleanse me of the sin!"

"Cleanse *thou* thyself of worldliness! Do not fear to follow the dictates of your affections, when they transgress no law of God's. Do not *shun* me like a self-righteous, worldly-wise, *professor;* but *meet* me like a really religious and loving woman," said Thurston, earnestly, taking her hand, and gazing into her eyes

"No," answered Marian, gravely, "in this single instance, I must not meet you, though my heart pleads like a sick child with me, to do it. Thurston, dear Thurston."

She raised her eyes to his as she spoke, and giving way to a sudden impulse, dropped her head upon his shoulder, put her arms around his neck, and embraced him. And then his better angel rose above the storm of passion that was surging through his veins, and calmed the tumult, and spoke through his lips.

"You are right, Marian—fairest and dearest, you are right. And I not only love you best of all women, but honor you more than all men. It shall be as you have said. I will not seek you anywhere. As the mother, dying of plague, denies herself the parting embrace of her 'unstricken' child—so, for your sake, will I refrain from the heaven of your presence."

"And, dear Thurston," she said, raising her head, "it will not be so hard to bear, as you now think. We shall see each other every Sunday, in the church, and every Monday in the lecture-room. We shall often be of the same invited company at neighbor's houses. Remember, also, that Christmas is coming, with its protracted festivities, when we shall see each other almost every evening, at some little neighborhood gathering. And now I must really hurry; oh! how late I am this morning! Good-bye, dearest Thurston!"

"Good-bye, my own Marian."

Blushingly she received his parting kiss, and hurried along the little foot-path leading to the village.

He had no farther opportunity of speaking with Marian that day. And when the afternoon service was over, Miss Thornton, the sister of Colonel Thornton, having discovered that Marian had walked to church, offered her a seat in her carriage, and made a little detour on her way home, in order to set her down at Old Field Cottage. The next evening, at the lecture-room, Thurston saw Marian again, and again drew strength and inspiration from her presence. But when the lecture was closed, she was among the first to depart. And he failed in his endeavor to get near and speak to her

Thurston had been perfectly sincere in his resolution not to seek a private interview with Marian; and he kept it faithfully all the week, with less temptation to break it, because he did not know where to watch for her.

But Sunday came again—and Thurston, with a little bit of human self-deception and finesse, avoided the forest path, where he had met her the preceding Sabbath, and saying to himself, that he would not waylay her, took the river road, refusing to confess even to himself that he acted upon the calculation that she also would take the same road, in order to avoid meeting him in the forest.

His "calculus of probabilities" had not failed him. He had not walked far upon the forest shaded banks of the river, before he saw Marian walking before him. He hastened and overtook her.

At first seeing him, her face flushed radiant with surprise and joy. She seemed to think that nothing short of necromancy could have conjured him to that spot. She had no reproaches for him, because she had no suspicion that he had trifled with his promise not to seek her. But she expressed her astonishment.

"I did not know you *ever* came this way," she said.

"Nor did I ever before, love; but I remembered my pledge, not to follow or to seek you, and so I avoided the woodland path where we met last Sunday," said Thurston, persuading himself that he spoke the precise truth.

It is not necessary to pursue with them this walk; lovers scarcely thank us for such intrusions. It is sufficient to say, that this was not the last one.

Blinded by passion and self-deception, and acting upon the same astute calculus of probabilities, Thurston often contrived to meet Marian in places where his presence might be least expected, and most often in paths that she had taken for the express purpose of keeping out of his way.

Thus it fell, that many forest walks and seashore strolls were taken, all through the lovely Indian Summer weather. And these seemed so much the result of pure accident, that Marian never dreamed of complaining that his pledge had been tampered with.

But Thurston began to urge her consent to a private marriage.

From a secret engagement to a secret marriage, the transition seemed to him very easy.

"And, dearest Marian, we are both of age, both free—we should neither displease God nor wrong man, by such a step—while it would at the same time secure our union, and save us from injustice and oppression! do you not see?"

Such was his argument, which he pleaded and enforced with all the powers of passion and eloquence. In vain. Though every interview increased his power over the maiden—though her affections and her will were both subjected, the domain of conscience was unconquered. And Marian still answered,

"Though a secret marriage would break no law of God or man, nor positively wrong any human creature, yet it might be the cause of misunderstanding and suspicion—and perhaps calumny, causing much distress to those who love and respect me. Therefore it would be wrong. And I must do no wrong, even for your dear sake."

Alas, Marian! The only way to have prevented *all* the wrong and misery, would have been to break off at once. If there is any reason on earth why two who love as lovers cannot marry, let the wrench come that parts them forever; it may be passing bitter—terrible—but it is better than the long heart-wasting of any other course.

So, through all the glorious autumnal weather, and through all the golden, hazy Indian Summer, their walks were continued—through the deep forest, by the lonely sea-shore, over the sunny hills, down the shady dells—the woods, the streams, the fields, their only confidants.

At last the weather changed—the gloomy skies and heavy rains of early winter came on, and the same inclement season that confined Commodore Waugh's obstreperous violence within the four walls of his bed-chamber, and put a temporary stop to the works at Luckenough, also interrupted the perilous pleasure of those woodland and water-side rambles.

Even the lectures failed to draw people through the rain and mud of December, and the church itself was thinly attended.

Thurston was faithfully at his post each Monday evening, though there might be no one but the professors, college boys, and villagers for his audience. He was also an indefatigable attendant upon church, in the hope of seeing Marian. But she did not appear either at church or lecture, and Thurston inveighed against the continued bad weather, and fell into gloom and despondency, from which neither the quaint pranks and wild caroling of Fanny, nor the near approach of Merry Christmas could for a moment arouse him. As Christmas approached, the weather became still worse—from inclement it became tempestuous. The rain changed to snow—and the snow-storm raged three days.

CHAPTER XXVI

CLOUDY.

"Oh! my cousin, shallow-hearted! Oh! my 'Lina,' mine no more!
Oh! the dreary, dreary moorland! Oh! the barren, barren shore!
Falser than all fancy fathoms! falser than all songs have sung'
Puppet to a guardian's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!"—*Tennyson.*

It was Christmas Eve, and the ground lay two feet deep under the snow, and the snow-storm was still raging.

Old Mr. Willcoxen sat half doubled up in his leather-covered elbow chair, in the chimney corner of his bed-room, occupied with smoking his clay pipe, and thinking about his money bags.

Fanny was in the cold, bleak upper rooms of the house, looking out of the windows upon the wide desolation of winter, the waste of snow, the bare forest, the cold, dark waters of the bay —listening to the driving tempest, and singing, full of glee as she always was, when the elements were in an uproar.

Thurston was the sole and surly occupant of the sitting-room, where he had thrown himself at full length upon the sofa, to lie and yawn over the newspaper, which he vowed was as stale as last year's almanac.

Suddenly the front door was thrown open, and some one came, followed by the driving wind and snow, into the hall.

Thurston threw aside his paper, started up, and went out.

What was his surprise to see Cloudesley Mornington standing there, with a face so haggard, with eyes so wild and despairing, that, in alarm, he exclaimed,

"Good Heaven, Cloudesley. What is the matter? Has anything happened at home?"

"Home! home! What home? I have no home upon this earth now, and never shall have!" exclaimed the poor youth distractedly.

"My dear fellow, never speak so despondently. What is it now? a difficulty with the Commodore?"

"God's judgment light upon him!" cried Cloudy, pushing past and hurrying up the stairs.

"'I never was a favorite—my uncle never smiled on me with half the fondness that blessed the other child,' yet I would not have cursed him so," said Thurston, as he returned to the sitting-room, threw himself down upon the settee and took up his newspaper.

But he could not resume his former composure; something in Cloudy's face had left a feeling of uneasiness in his mind, and the oftener he recalled the expression the more troubled he became.

Until at length he could bear the anxiety no longer, and quietly leaving his room, he went up stairs in search of the youth, and paused before the boy's door. By the clicking, metallic sounds within, he suspected him to be engaged in loading a pistol; for what purpose! Not an instant was to be risked in rapping or questioning.

With one vigorous blow of his heel, Thurston burst open the door, and sprung forward and dashed the fatal weapon from his hand, and then confronted him, exclaiming,

"Good God, Cloudy! What does this mean?"

Cloudy looked at him wildly for a minute, and when Thurston repeated the question, he answered with a hollow laugh,

"That I am crazy, I guess! don't you think so?"

"Cloudy, my dear fellow, we have been like brothers all our lives; now wont you tell me what has brought you to this pass? What troubles you so much? Perhaps I can aid you in some way. Come, what is it now?"

"And you really don't know what it is? Don't you know that there is a wedding on hand?"

"A wedding!"

"Aye, man alive! A wedding! They are going to marry the child Jacquelina, who is scarcely out of her short frocks and pantalettes, to old Grimshaw."

"Oh, yes, I know that; but, my dear boy, what of it? Surely *you* were never in love with little Jacko?"

"*In love* with her! ha! ha! *no*, not as *you* understand it! who take it to be that fantastical passion that may be inspired by the first sight of a pretty face. No! I am not in love with her, unless I could be in love with myself. For Lina was my other self. Oh, you who can talk so glibly of being 'in love,' little know that strength of attachment when two hearts have grown together from childhood."

"It is like a brother's and a sister's."

"Never! brothers and sisters cannot love so. What brother ever loved a sister as I have loved Lina from our infancy. What brother ever would have done and suffered as much for his sister as I have for Lina?"

"You! done and suffered for Lina!" said Thurston, beginning to think he was really mad.

"Yes! how many faults as a boy I have shouldered for her. How many floggings I have taken. How many shames I have borne for her, which she never knew. Yes! faults that in a little, tiny girl were almost excusable, but in a boy were mean and dishonorable, I have a thousand times allowed to be laid to my charge, and borne the pain and the shame of the punishment, rather than have her so much as slightly blamed; and she never knew it. How I loved her. That was in our school days. Oh, even then! when I would go to school in the morning, the first one I would seek out in the play-ground would be her. But most of the time I was late, because grandfather kept me at work like a slave in the morning, just allowing me time to get to school. And if the school was *in*, the first thing I'd do when I'd get into the passage, would be to look up at the row of girls' bonnets hanging there, to see if *her* little hood was among them. If it was, my heart bounded like a barque—if it were not, it sank like a plummet. And when I went in and missed her from her little bench, I looked oftener at the door than at the page of my book, until she came. Poor Lina. Thurston, the little wild thing was almost always at the foot of the class, and if I happened to be at the head, I would let three or four boys and girls get above me, that I might fall next to *her*. For two reasons, Thurston! to keep any other boy from standing next to her, and also to keep her in countenance. And since the school-days, all my thoughts, all my dreams, all my ambitions, have been for *her*—her society, her pleasure, her good! Oh! how I have spent my night watches at sea, dreaming of her. For years I have been saving up all my money to buy a pretty cottage for her and her mother that she loves so well. I meant to have bought or built one this very year. And after having made the pretty nest, to have wooed my pretty bird to come and occupy it. I meant to have been such a good boy to her mother, too! I pleased myself with fancying how the poor little timorous woman would rest in so much peace and confidence in *our* home—with me and Lina. I have saved so much that I am richer than any one knows, and I meant to have accomplished all that this very time of coming home. I hurried home. I reached the house. I ran in like a wild boy as I was. *Her* voice called me. I followed its sound—ran up stairs to her room. I found her in bed. I thought she was sick. But she sprang up, and threw herself upon my bosom, and with her arms clasped about my neck, wept as if her heart would break. And while I wondered what the matter could be, her mother interfered and told me. God's judgment light upon them all, I say! Oh! it was worse than *murder* It was a horrid, horrid crime, that has no name because there is none heinous enough for it! Thurston! I acted like a very brute! God help me, I was both stunned and maddened, as it seems to me *now*. For I could not speak. I tore her little, fragile, clinging arms from off my neck, and thrust her from me. And here I am."

"Were you engaged?"

"Engaged? Yes! that is to say, I *thought* we were! but it appears that *I* was engaged, and she was not! ha! ha!"

"You engaged, and she not?"

"Yes! It was a funny engagement! quite a unique one! I daresay you never heard of such a one in your life," exclaimed Cloudy, laughing in a wild, insane manner. "You shall hear," he continued, seeing that Thurston's countenance expressed doubt and perplexity. "Oh, *you* shall hear! Yes, it was a funny betrothal! And the proposal came from the other party? ha! ha! curious, wasn't it?"

Thurston regarded him with painful sympathy.

Cloudy pushed up the hair from his burning forehead, and related the story.

"There! *that* was our engagement! Don't ask me how I loved *her!* I have no words to tell you!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FAIRY BRIDE.

> "And the little lady grew silent and thin,
>   Paling, and ever paling,
> As is the way with a hid chagrin,
>   And they all perceived she was ailing."—*Browning.*

SINCE the morning of her ill-starred marriage, Sans Souci had waned like a waning moon; and the bridegroom saw, with dismay, his fairy bride slowly fading, passing, vanishing from his sight. There was no very marked disorder, no visible or tangible symptoms to guide the physicians, who were in succession summoned to her relief. Very obscure is the pathology of a wasting heart, very occult the scientific knowledge that can search out the secret sickness, which, the farther it is sought, shrinks the deeper from sight.

Once, indeed, while she was sitting with her aunt and uncle, the latter suddenly and rudely mentioned Cloudy's name, saying that "the fool" was sulking over at Dell-Delight; that he believed he would have blown his brains out if it had not been for Thurston, and for his own part, he almost wished that he had been permitted to do so, because he thought none *but* a fool would ever commit suicide, and the fewer fools there were in the world the better, &c. &c. His monologue was suddenly arrested by Henrietta's rushing forward to lift up Sans Souci, who had turned very pale, and dropped from her seat to the floor, where she lay silently quivering and gasping, like some poor wounded and dying bird.

They tacitly resolved, from this time forth, never to name Cloudy in her presence again.

And the Commodore struck his heavy stick upon the floor, and emphatically thanked God that Nace Grimshaw had not been present to witness her agitation and its cause.

And Jacquelina waned and waned. And the physicians, wearied out with her case, prescribed "Change of air and scene—pleasant company—cheerful amusement—excitement," &c. A winter in Washington was suggested. And the little invalid was consulted as to her wishes upon the subject. "Yes." Jacquelina said she would go—anywhere, if *only* her aunty and Marian would go with her—she wanted Marian.

Mrs. Waugh readily consented to accompany her favorite, and also to try to induce "Hebe," as she called blooming Marian, to make one of their party.

And the very first day that the weather and the roads would admit of traveling, Mrs. Waugh rode over to Old Fields to see Marian, and talk with her about the contemplated journey.

The proposition took the young lady by surprise; there were several little lets and hindrances to her immediate acceptance of the invitation, which might, however, be disposed of; and, finally, Marian begged a day to consider of it. With this answer, Mrs. Waugh was forced to be content, and she took her leave, saying,

"Remember, Hebe! that I think your society and conversation more needful, and likely to be more beneficial to poor Lapwing, than anything else we can procure for her; therefore, *pray* decide to go with us, if possible."

Marian deprecated such reliance upon her imperfect abilities, but expressed her strong desire to do all the good she possibly could effect for the invalid, and made little doubt but that she should at the least be able to attend her. So, with this hope, Mrs. Waugh kissed her and departed.

The very truth was, that Marian wished to see and consult her betrothed before consenting to leave home for what seemed to her to be so long a journey, and for so long a period. In fact, Marian was not now a free agent; she had suffered her free will to slip from her own possession into that of Thurston.

She had not seen him all the wretched weather, and her heart now yearned for his presence. And that very afternoon Marian had a most pressing errand to Charlotte Hall, to purchase groceries, which the little family had got entirely out of, during the continuance of the snow.

There was no certainty that she should see Thurston; still she hoped to do so, nor was her hope disappointed.

He overtook her a short distance from the village, on her road home.

Their meeting was a very glad one—heart sprang to heart and hand to hand—and neither affected to conceal the pleasure that it gave them. After the first joyous greetings, and the first earnest and affectionate inquiries about each other's health and welfare, both became grave and silent for a little while. Marian was reflecting how to propose to leave him for a three months' visit to the gay capitol, little thinking that Thurston himself was perplexed with the question of how to break to her the news of the necessity of his own immediate departure to England for an absence of at least six or eight months. Marian spoke first.

"Dear Thurston, I have something to propose to you, that I fear you will not like very well; but if you do not, speak freely; for I am not bound."

"I—I do not understand you, love! Pray explain at once," said he, quick to take alarm where *she* was concerned.

"You know poor little Jacquelina has fallen into very bad health and spirits? Well, her physicians recommend change of air and scene, and her friends have decided to take her to Washington to pass the remainder of the winter. And the little creature has set her sickly fancy upon having me to go with her. Now, I think it in some sort a duty to go, and I would not willingly refuse. Nevertheless, dear Thurston, I dread to leave you, and if you think you will be very lonesome this winter without me—if you are likely to miss me one-half as much as I have missed *you* these last three weeks, I will not leave you at all."

He put his hand out and took hers, and pressed it, and would have carried it to his lips, but her wicked little pony suddenly jerked away.

"My own, dearest Marian," he said, "my frank, generous love! if I were going to remain in this neighborhood this winter, no consideration, I fear, for others' good, would induce me to consent to part with you."

It was now Marian's turn to change color. and falter in her tones, as she asked,

"You—you are not going away?"

'Sweet Marian, yes! A duty—a necessity too imperative to be denied, summons me."

She kept her eyes fixed on his face in painful anxiety.

"I will explain. You have heard, dear Marian, that after my father's death my mother married a second time?"

"No—I never heard of it."

"She did, however—her second husband was a Scotchman. She lived with him seven years, and then died, leaving him one child, a boy six years of age. After my mother's death, my stepfather returned to Scotland, taking with him my half-brother, and leaving me with my grandfather. And all communication gradually ceased between us. Within this week, however, I have received letters from Edinburg, informing me of the death of my stepfather, and the perfect destitution of my half-brother, now a lad of twelve years of age. He is at present staying with the clergyman who attended his father in his last illness, and who has written me the letters giving me the information that I now give you. Thus you see, my dearest love, how urgent the duty is that takes me from your side. Yet—What! *tears*, my Marian! Ah, if so! let my dearest one but say the word, and I will not leave her. I will send money over to the lad instead."

"No, no! Ah! no, never trust your mother's orphan boy to strangers, or to his own guidance. Go for the poor, desolate lad, and never leave him, or suffer him to leave you. I know what orphanage in childhood is, dear Thurston, and so must you. Bring the boy home. And if he lives with you, I will do all I can to supply his mother's place."

"Dear girl! dear, dear Marian, my heart so longs to press you to itself. A plague upon these horses that keep us so far apart! I wish we were on foot!"

"Do you?" smiled Marian, directing his attention to the sloppy path down which they were riding.

Thurston smiled ruefully, and then sighed.

"When do you set out on your long journey, dear Thurston?"

"I have not fixed the time, my Marian! I have not the courage to name the day that shall part us for so long."

He looked at her with a heavy sigh, and then added,

"I shrink from appointing the time of going, as a criminal might shrink from giving the signal for his own execution."

"Then let some other agent do it," said Marian, smiling at his earnestness. Then she added—"I shall go to Washington with Jacquelina. Her party will set out on Wednesday next. And, dear Thurston, I shall not like to leave you here, at all. I shall go with more content, if I know that you set out the *same day* for your journey."

"But, fairest Marian, never believe but that if you go to Washington, I shall take that city in my way. There is a vessel to sail on the first of February, from Baltimore, for Liverpool. I shall probably go by her. I shall pass through Washington City on my way to Baltimore. Nay indeed! what should hinder me from joining your party and traveling with you, since we are friends and neighbors, and go at the same time, from the same neighborhood, by the same road, to the same place?" he asked, eagerly.

A smile of joy illumined Marian's face.

"Truly," she answered, after a short pause, "I see no objection to that plan. And, oh! Thurston," she said, holding out her hand, and looking at him with her face holy and beaming with affection, "do you know what fullness of life and comfort—what sweetness of rest and contentment I feel in your presence, when I can have that rightly?"

"My own dear Marian! Heaven hasten the day when we shall be forever united."

And he suddenly sprang from his horse—lifted her from her saddle, and holding her carefully above the sloppy path, folded her fondly to his bosom, pressed kisses on her lips, and then replaced her, saying,

"Dear Marian, forgive me! My heart was half breaking with its need to press you to itself! Now then, dearest, I shall consider it settled that I join your party to Washington. I shall call at Locust Hill and see Mrs. Waugh, inform her of my destination, and ask her permission to accompany her. By the way—when do you give your answer to that lady?"

"I shall ride over to the Hill to-morrow morning, for that purpose."

"Very well, dearest. In that case I will also appoint the morning as my time of calling; so that I may have the joy of meeting you there."

They had by this time reached the verge of the forest and the cross-road where their paths divided. And here they bade a loving, lingering adieu to each other, and separated.

That evening Marian announced to Edith her decision to accompany Jacquelina to Washington City.

Edith approved the plan.

The next morning, Marian left the house to go to Locust Hill, where, besides the family, she found Thurston already awaiting her.

Thurston was seated by Jacquelina, endeavoring, by his gay and brilliant sallies of wit and humor, to charm away the sullen sadness of the pale and petulant little beauty.

And, truth to tell, soon fitful, fleeting smiles broke over the little wan face—smiles that grew brighter and more frequent as she noticed the surly anxiety they gave to Doctor Grimshaw, who sat, like the dog in the manger, watching Thurston sunning himself in the light of eyes that never by any chance shone upon *him*, their rightful proprietor!

Never! for though Jacquelina had paled and waned, failed and faded, until she seemed more like a moonlight phantom than a form of flesh and blood—her spirit was unbowed, unbroken, and she had kept her oath of uncompromising enmity with fearful perseverance. Petitions, expostulations, prayers, threats, had been all in vain to procure one smile, one word, one glance of compliance or forgiveness. And the fate of Doctor Grimshaw, with his unwon bride, was like that of Tantalus. And now the inconceivable tortures of jealousy were about to be added to his other torments, for this man now sitting by his side, and basking in the sunshine of her smiles, was the all-praised Adonis who had won her maiden admiration months ago.

But Thurston soon put an end to his sufferings—not in consideration of his feelings, but because the young gentleman could not afford to lose or risk the chance of making one of the party which was to number Marian among its members. Therefore, with a light smile and careless bow, he left the side of Jacquelina and crossed over to Mrs. Waugh, with whom, also, he entered into a gay and bantering conversation, in the course of which, Mrs. Waugh mentioned to him their purpose of going to Washington for a month or two.

It was then that, with an air of impromptu, Thurston informed her of his own contemplated journey and voyage, and of his intention to go to Baltimore by way of Washington.

"And when do you leave here?" asked Mrs. Waugh.

"I thought of starting on Wednesday morning."

"The very day that we shall set out—why can't we travel in company?" asked Henrietta, socially.

"I should be charmed indeed—delighted! And *nothing* shall prevent me having that honor and pleasure, if Mrs. Waugh will permit my attendance."

"Why, my dear Thurston, to be sure I will—but don't waste fine speeches on your uncle's old wife. How do you travel?"

"As far as Washington I shall go on horseback, with a mounted groom to bring back the horses, when I proceed on my journey by stage to Baltimore."

"On horseback! Now that is excellent—that is really providential, as it falls out—for here is my Hebe, whom I have coaxed to be of the party, and who will have to perform the journey also on horseback, and you will make an admirable cavalier for her!"

Thurston turned and bowed to Marian, and expressed, in courtly terms, the honor she would confer, and the pleasure she would give, in permitting him to serve her. And no one, to have seen *him*, would have dreamed that the subject had ever before been mentioned between them.

Marian blushed and smiled, and expressing her thanks, accepted his offered escort.

These preliminaries being settled, Thurston soon after arose and took leave.

Marian remained some time longer to arrange some little preparatory matters with Mrs. Waugh, and then bade them good-bye, and hastened homeward.

But she saw Thurston walking his horse up and down the forest-path, and impatiently waiting for her.

Doctor Grimshaw was very much dissatisfied; and no sooner had Marian left the house, and left him alone with Mrs. Waugh and Jacquelina, than he turned to the elder lady, and said, with some asperity,

"I think it would have been well, Mrs. Waugh, if you had consulted the other members of your party before making so important an addition to it.

"And I think it would be better, Doctor Grimshaw, if you would occupy your valuable time and attention with affairs that fall more immediately within your own province," said Henrietta, loftily, as she would sometimes speak.

Doctor Grimshaw deigned no reply. He closed his mouth with a spasmodic snap, and sat ruminating—the very picture of wretchedness. He was indeed to be pitied! For no patience, no kindness, no wooing could win from his bride one smile. That very afternoon, under the combined goadings of exasperated self-love and poignant jealousy, Doctor Grimshaw sought an interview with Mrs. L'Oiseau, and urged her in the most strenuous manner to exert her maternal influence in bringing her daughter to terms.

And Mrs L'Oiseau sent for Jacquelina, to have a talk with her. But not all her arguments, entreaties, or even tears, could prevail with the obstinate bride to relax one single degree of her unforgiving antagonism to her detested bridegroom.

"Mother," she said, with sorrowful bitterness, "you are well now; indeed you never was so ill as I was led to believe: and you are independent. I parted with my only hope of happiness in life to render you so; I sold myself, in a formal marriage, to be the legal medium of endowing Doctor Grimshaw with a certain landed estate. Even into that measure I was deceived—no more of that! it crazes me! The conditions are all fulfilled: *he* will have the property, and *you* are independent. And now he has no further claim upon me, and no power over me!"

"He *has*, Jacquelina; and it is only Doctor Grimshaw's forbearance that permits you to indulge in this wicked whim."

"His forbearance! Oh! *hasn't* he been forbearing though!" she exclaimed, with a mocking laugh.

"Yes! he *has*, little as you are disposed to acknowledge it. You do not seem to know that he can *compel* your submission!"

"*Can* he!" she hissed, drawing her breath sharply through her clenched teeth, and clutching her fingers convulsively, while a white ring gleamed around the blue iris of her dilated eyes. "Let him try! let him drive me to desperation, and then learn how spirits dare to escape! But he will not do that, Mimmy! he reads me better than you do; he knows that he must not urge me beyond my powers of endurance. No, mother! Let him take my uncle into his counsels again, if he pleases; let them combine all their ingenuity, and wickedness, and power, and bring them all to bear on me at once; let them do their worst—they shall not gain one concession from me; not one smile, not one word, not one single look of tolerance—so help me Heaven! And they know it, mother!—they know it! And why? *You* are secured from their malice: *now* they can turn no *screws upon my heart-strings!*—and I am free! They know it, mother—they know it, if you do not."

"But, Jacquelina, this is a very, very wicked life to lead! You are living in a state of mortal sin while you persist in this shocking rebellion against the authority and just rights of your husband."

"He is *not* my husband! that I utterly deny! I have never made him such! There was nothing in our nominal marriage to give him that claim. It was a mere legal form, for a mercenary purpose. It was a wicked and shameful subterfuge; a sacrilegious desecration of God's holy altar! but in its wickedness Heaven knows I had little will! I was deluded and disturbed: facts were misrepresented to me, threats were made that could never have been executed; my fears were excited for your life; my affections were wrought upon; I was driven out of my senses even before I did consent to be his nominal wife—the legal sumpter-mule to carry him an estate. I promised nothing more, and I have kept all my promises. It is over! it is over! it is done! and it cannot be undone!—But I never—never will forgive that man for the part he played in the drama!"

"Ave Maria, Mater Dolorosa! Was ever a mother so sorrowful as I? Holy saints and angels! how you shock me! Don't you know, wretched child, that you are committing deadly sin? Don't you know, alas! the holy church would refuse you its communion?"

"Let it! I will be excommunicated before I will give Doctor Grimshaw one tolerant glance! I will risk the eternal rather than fall into the *nearer* perdition!"

"Holy Mary save her! Don't you know, most miserable child! that such is your condition, that if you were to die now your soul would go to burning flames?"

"Ha! ha! Where do you think it is *now*, Mimmy?"

"You are mad! You don't know what you're talking about! And, alas! you are half an infidel, I know, for you don't believe in hell!"

"*Yes, I do*, Mimmy! Oh! yes, indeed I do! If ever my faith was shaken in *that* article of belief, it is firm enough now! It is more than re-established, for, look you, Mimmy! I believe in Heaven, but I *know* of hell!"

"I'm very glad you do, my dear. And I hope you will meditate much upon it, and that it may lead you to change your course in regard to Doctor Grimshaw."

"Mimmy!" she said, with a wild laugh, "*is* there a deeper pit in perdition than that to which you urge me now?"

Fortune certainly favored the lovers that day; for when Thurston reached home in the evening, his grandfather said to him,

"Well, Mr. Jackanapes, since you are to sail from the port of Baltimore, I think it altogether best that you should take a private conveyance, and go by way of Washington."

"That will be a very lonesome manner of traveling, sir," answered the young man, demurely.

"It will be a very *cheap* one, you mean, and therefore will not befit you, Sir Millionaire! It will *cost* nothing, and therefore lose its only charm for you, my Lord Spendthrift," cried the miser, sharply.

"On the contrary, sir, I only object to the loneliness of the long journey."

"No one to chatter to, eh, Mr. Magpie! Well it need not be so! There's Nace Grimshaw, and his set—extravagant fools!—going up to the city to flaunt among the fashionables. You can go as they go, and chatter to the other monkey, Jacquelina—and make Old Nace mad with jealousy, so that he shall go and hang himself, and leave you the widow and her fortune! Come! is *there* mischief enough to amuse you? But I know you wont do it! I know it! I know it! I know it! just because I wish you to!"

"What, sir? drive Doctor Grimshaw to hang himself?"

"No, sir! I mean you wont join the party."

"You mistake, sir. I will certainly do so, if you wish it," said Thurston, gravely.

"Humph! Well, that is something better than I expected. You can take the new gig, you know, and take Melchisedek to drive you, and to bring it back."

"Just as you say, sir," said the young gentleman, with filial compliance.

"And mind, take care that you are not led into any waste of money."

"I shall take care, sir."

And here Thurston's heart was gladdened within him. He profoundly thanked his stars. The new gig! What an opportunity to save Marian the fatigue of an equestrian journey—offer her an easy seat, and have the blessing of her near companionship for the whole trip! While his servant, Melchisedek, could ride Marian's pony. And this arrangement would be so natural, so necessary, so *inevitable*, that not even the jealous, suspicious miser, could make the least question of its perfect propriety. For, under the circumstances, what gentleman could leave a lady of his party to travel wearily on horseback, while himself and his servant rode cosily at ease in a gig? What gentleman would not rather give the lady his seat in the gig—take the reins himself and drive her, while his servant took her saddle-horse? So thought Thurston. Yet he did not hint the subject to his grandfather—the method of their traveling should seem the impromptu effect of chance. The next morning being Sunday, he threw himself in Marian's path, waited for her, and rode with her a part of the way to church. And while they were in company, he told her of the new arrangement in the manner of traveling, that good fortune had enabled him to make—that if she would so honor and delight him, he should have her in the gig by his side for the whole journey. He was so happy, so *very* happy in the thought, he said.

"And so am I, dearest Thurston! very, very happy in the idea of being with you. Thank God!" said the warm-hearted girl, offering her hand, which he took and covered with kisses.

Thurston's good fortune was not over. His star was still in the ascendant, for after the morning service, while the congregation were leaving the church, he saw Mrs. Waugh beckon him to her side. He quickly obeyed the summons. And then the lady said,

"I may not see you again soon, Thurston, and therefore I tell you now—that if you intend to join our party to Washington, you must make all your arrangements to come over to Locust Hill on Tuesday evening, and spend the night with us; as we start at a very early hour on Wednesday morning, and should not like to be kept waiting. My Hebe is also coming on Tuesday evening, to stay all night. Now, not a word, Thurston. I know what dilatory folks young people are. And I know very well that if I don't make sure of you on Tuesday evening, you will keep us a full hour beyond our time on Wednesday morning—you know you will."

Thurston was secretly delighted. To spend the evening with Marian! to spend the night under the same roof with her—preparatory to their social journey in the morning. Thurston began to think that he was born under a lucky planet. He laughingly assured Mrs. Waugh that he had not the slightest intention or wish to dispute her commands; and that on Tuesday evening he should present himself punctually at the supper-table at Locust Hill. He further informed her that as his grandfather had most arbitrarily forced upon him the use of his new gig, he should bring it, and offer Miss Mayfield a seat.

It was now Mrs. Waugh's turn to be delighted, and to declare that she was very glad—that it would be so much easier and pleasanter to her Hebe, than the cold, exposed, and fatiguing equestrian manner of traveling. "But mind, young gentleman, you are not to make love to my Hebe! for we all think her far too good for mortal man!" laughed Mrs. Waugh.

Thurston gravely promised that he would not—if he could help it. And so, with mutual good feeling, they shook hands and separated.

On Monday evening, at his farewell lecture, Thurston met Marian again, and joyfully announced to her the invitation that Mrs. Waugh had extended to him. And the maiden's delightful smile assured him of her full sympathy with his gladness.

And on Tuesday evening, the whole party for Washington was assembled around the tea-table at Locust Hill. The evening passed very cheerily. The Commodore, Mrs. Waugh, Marian, and Thurston, were all in excellent spirits. And Thurston, out of pure good nature, sought to cheer and enliven the pretty, peevish bride, Jacquelina, who, out of caprice, affected a pleasure in his attentions that she was very far from feeling. This gave so much umbrage to Doctor Grimshaw, that Mrs. Waugh really feared some unpleasant demonstration from the grim bridegroom, and seized the first quiet opportunity of saying to the young gentleman,

"Do, Thurston, leave Lapwing alone! Don't you see that that maniac is as jealous as a Turk?"

"Oh! he is!" thought Thurston, benevolently. "Very well! in that case his jealousy shall not starve for want of aliment;" and he devoted himself to the capricious bride with more *impressement* than before—consoling himself for his discreet neglect of Marian, by reflecting on the blessed morrow that should place her at his side for the whole day.

And so the evening passed; and at an early hour the party separated to get a good long night's rest, preparatory to their early start in the morning.

But Thurston, for *one*, was too happy to sleep for some time: too happy in the novel blessedness of resting under the same roof with his own beautiful and dearest Marian.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BRIDE OF AN HOUR.

"He calmed her fears, and she was calm,
And breathed her vows with virgin pride.
And so he won his Marian,
His bright and beauteous bride."—*Altered from Coleridge.*

It was a clear, cold, sharp, invigorating winter morning. The snow was crusted over with hoar frost, and the bare forest trees were hung with icicles. The cunning fox, the 'possum and the 'coon, crept shivering from their dens; but the shy, gray rabbit, and the tiny, brown wood-mouse, still nestled in their holes. And none of nature's small children ventured from their nests, save the hardy and courageous little snow birds that came to seek their food even at the very threshold of their natural enemy—man.

The approaching sun had scarcely as yet reddened the eastern horizon, or flushed the snow, when at Locust Hill our travelers assembled in the dinning-room, to partake of their last meal previous to setting forth.

Commodore Waugh, and Mrs. L'Oiseau, who were fated to remain at home and keep house, were also there to see the travelers off.

The fine vitalizing air of the winter morning, the cheerful bustle preparatory to their departure, the novelty of the breakfast eaten by candle-light, all combined to raise and exhilarate the spirits of the party.

After the merry, hasty meal was over, Mrs. Waugh, in her voluminous cloth cloak, fur tippet, muff, and wadded hood; Jacquelina, enveloped in several fine, soft shawls, and wearing a warm, chinchilla bonnet; and Dr. Grimshaw, in his dreadnaught overcoat and cloak, and long-eared fur cap, all entered the large family carriage, where, with the additional provision of foot-stoves and hot bricks, they had every prospect of a comfortable mode of conveyance.

Old Oliver, in his many-caped drab overcoat, and fox-skin cap and gloves, sat upon the coachman's box with the proud air of a king upon his throne. And why not? It was Oliver's very first visit to the city, and the suit of clothes he wore was bran new!

Thurston's new gig was furnished with two fine buffalo robes —one laid down on the seats and the floor as a carpet, and the other laid over as a coverlet. His forethought had also provided a foot-stove for Marian. And never was a happier man than he when he handed his smiling companion into the gig settled her comfortably in her seat, placed the foot-stove under her feet, sprang in and seated himself beside her, tucked the buffalo robe carefully in, and took the reins, and waited the signal to move on.

Melchisedek, or as he was commonly called, Cheesy, mounted upon Marian's pony, rode on in advance, to open the gates for the party. Mrs. Waugh's carriage followed. And Thurston's gig brought up the rear. And thus the travelers set forth.

The sun had now risen in cloudless splendor, and was striking long lines of crimson light across the snow, and piercing through the forest aisles. Flocks of saucy little snow-birds alighted fearlessly in their path; but the cunning little gray rabbits just peeped with their round bright eyes, and then quickly hopped away.

I need not describe their merry journey at length. My readers will readily imagine how delightful was the trip to at least *two* of the party. And those two were not Dr. Grimshaw and Jacquelina.

Never in all his life had Thurston felt so joyous! And never had his Marian seemed so lovely. There are some beautiful faces which the cold mars. Of such was not blooming Marian's. Her warm rich blood and fine elastic temperament glowed and rebounded against the chilling and depressing action of the frost. And the only effect of the sharp, fresh, winter morning air upon her splendid organization was highly vitalizing and exhilarating, kindling a more vivid glow on her cheeks and lips, and a more splendid light in her clear blue eyes. Thurston was positively more in love than ever, though that could scarcely seem possible. And he used the opportunity thus afforded him to press his suit for a private marriage. He prayed and entreated with all the power that passion can give to eloquence. In vain! Marian was firm, "firm as an iceberg," Thurston said, reproachfully. He used the same arguments that she had answered before.

"Dearest Marian, you are of age. You have neither parent nor guardian, nor even patron or benefactor, to whom you owe the slightest obedience. In giving me this dear hand in private marriage, while making me inexpressibly happy, you will transgress no law of God's nor of man's, nor do any wrong to any human being!"

Specious arguments and well nigh unanswerable, but to which Marian would reply,

"What you propose to me, dear Thurston, may not be absolutely wrong, yet in a secret marriage there is an appearance of evil which I am unwilling that you or I should assume. Dear Thurston, I do not like a mystery, I like our lives to be as open to the inspection of man as to God—as open as the blessed daylight!"

"Or as your own fair, clear, radiant beauty, my Marian! But, oh! my darling girl, how willful, how arbitrary, how cruel and despotic you are with your likes and dislikes!"

"Dearest Thurston, if you only knew how much pain it gives me, how unnatural it feels to me to refuse you anything, you would not press me so. But, dearest Thurston, be patient for a little while, and reflect that the time shall come when your will shall be the law of your Marian's life, when there'll be no wish your heart can form but shall govern all her actions."

"Ah! dear, cruel girl! how do I know that? Who shall assure me of that? I am going far away—you will be left here. Life is changeable, youth inconstant; and though I know the truth of my own heart, know that I am bound to you forever and forever—how do I know *yours*—who shall assure me of its constancy?"

"I will," said Marian, earnestly. "*I* will. Were I bound to you in marriage, as fast as priests and legislators could bind us, I could not be truer to you than I am now, and shall ever be. Take my hand in yours, and receive my oath of fealty—that henceforth, in my heart of hearts, I will consider you as my husband, and the arbiter of my earthly fate; that I will never turn my thoughts for an instant to the contemplation of any other possible destiny than that of your wife! Are you satisfied now, dearest Thurston?" she murmured softly, letting her face fall gently on his shoulder.

Satisfied! no, he was not! Never, in the whole course of his life, had he felt so *un*satisfied. Never, even since he had known Marian, had his passions been so deeply moved as now they were by the beauty, grace, and charm—the ineffable fascination of her looks and words and manners. Swiftly passing his arm around her waist, he whispered, in tones scarcely audible from excess of feeling,

"Marian! Marian! Marian! Oh, *give* yourself to me! Give yourself to me when we get to Washington, or I shall never go from there. I can never leave you, Marian; never! Nor can I wait for you. Be mine, Marian! let all else go! wealth, position, prospects, all—all—but you! Come poverty, struggle, trial, any and every form of suffering, rather than a parting from you! See! now I implore—not for a *secret* marriage, but for a *public* one! Oh, I should be proud to claim this pearl above price as my own in the sight of heaven and earth! Speak, Marian, speak! Will you give me your hand in the presence of our friends, as soon as we get to Washington?"

"No, dearest Thurston, I must not. I dare not. I *will* not bring you to poverty. I refused a secret marriage, and still more absolutely do I reject the public one."

"And *why?* And why? Heaven and earth! was ever a man so cruelly treated—so stretched upon the rack? *Why?* I ask you, Marian?"

"Because I will not consent that you shall sacrifice all your prospects for love of me!"

"Is that it? Then I will do it whether you will or not! As soon as I have taken you to Washington, I will turn about and go down to Dell-Delight, and say to the old man there—'Sir, make your will and leave your large estate to whom you please, for I will marry no other woman except Miss Mayfield, and I will marry her as soon as I can win her consent.' And then, when the old man has turned me adrift, and I have nothing to lose—then, Marian, you will accept me!" said Thurston, passionately, vehemently.

"No," she answered, gently. "No, dearest, still *less* would

I do so *then.* If you had nothing to hope from your uncle—if you had your own way to make in the world—I would never consent to be a clog upon your steps!"

"Then, Marian, you *do* intend to drive me mad."

"Thurston," she said, "I intend to be your true, faithful, patient maiden, until I can be your happy wife."

A passionate reply arose to his lips; but before he could give it utterance, his attention was suddenly arrested by the sight of Mrs. Waugh's carriage stopping and filling up the way. Before them was a narrow, guttered, dangerous road, winding between the trees, up a steep and difficult hill. And old Oliver had got down to lead the horses.

Within the carriage, Mrs. Waugh's voice was heard laughing and speaking. She seemed to be the life of her own little party, and, alas! the *only* life there; but still she laughed and jested, partly from the abundance of her own good health, and the overflowing of her own good nature, and partly with the wish to arouse and amuse the pensive, peevish little bride and her morose bridegroom. And now she let down her window and put out her head, and good-humoredly hailed Thurston, and warned him to mind his horse's head, and not grow sentimental, and upset the gig and break her Hebe's neck, while pouring soft nonsense into her ear.

When they got up the steep, winding hill, the carriages fell into their former order, and proceeded as before. Thurston renewed his former earnest importunities, but with no better success than formerly, until at length for the time being he desisted. And still, in places where their road was steep, narrow, guttered, or otherwise difficult, and their carriages had to proceed slowly, Mrs. Waugh would let down her window, put out her head, and open the little battery with her small shot of badinage.

And so pleasantly they traveled on until three o'clock, when they reached Horsehead, where they stopped to dine, and where, upon account of Jacquelina's extreme fatigue, they concluded to spend the night.

The next morning, after an early breakfast, they resumed their journey, traveling in the same manner and order, until about noon, when they reached Washington City.

At that time, the principal hotel in Washington was the Mansion House, near the end of the city. To this house our party of travelers immediately proceeded. And having the good fortune to find excellent apartments vacant, they secured them at once, and settled themselves down for the winter.

Mrs. Waugh had several friends and acquaintances among the old substantial citizens of Washington—families whose forefathers had owned the soil, and lived upon it, long before the city itself was laid out; and she lost no time in advising them of her presence. And Doctor Grimshaw also, besides being an intimate friend of the representative from their own Congressional district, and a political partizan of their state's senators, was also well acquainted with some of the leading men of the administration, and had brought letters of presentation to others, which he did not delay to forward.

Thurston Willcoxen was intimate with the family of the resident French Minister, having formed their acquaintance in Paris. And thus, with all these facilities of introduction, our rustic friends soon found an easy and pleasant entrance into the best society of Washington.

But of all the party, the poor little, half-crazed, half-brokenhearted bride, Jacquelina, was the only one who threw herself with perfect abandon into the whirl of fashionable society. She accepted every invitation, and made a point of being present at every possible place of amusement or festivity. Thus, no matter what the state of the weather might be, night after night would she drag Doctor Grimshaw into scenes and companies opposed to his tastes and habits, and where, besides, he was not in the least fitted to shine.

But Jacquelina was. In those scenes of gayety she seemed quite a different being from the pale, feverish invalid that she was at home. There was a brilliant glow upon her cheeks, a splendid light in her eyes, a flow of spirits, and a flash of wit as startling, as wondrous, as fascinating as it was unreal, illusive, and bewildering. She was excessively admired and sought for, and seemed not in the least degree disposed to reserve herself.

Thus evening after evening was passed in the whirl of fashionable society. Nor was Sunday an exception to the rule, for upon that evening, rather than stay at home, she would insist upon going to some church or some lecture-room to hear some discourse upon home or foreign missions, Sunday schools, temperance, colonization, or some other kindred subject in which she took not the slightest interest, and of which she heard not one single word, while she sat with her little, fair, transparent face as still, as lifeless as a picture, and her unresting spirit far away—far away!

So night after night, and nearly all night long, would she keep Doctor Grimshaw out. Not that she in the least desired his "comfortable presence." But, inasmuch as he could not prevent her from going out, and could not banish the handsome and fascinating Thurston Willcoxen from the same party, he was resolved always to attend his "wife," as he delighted to call Sans Souci, in spite of her indignant and frenzied repudiation of the title. And to Doctor Grimshaw's inexpressible annoyance and vexation, strangers invariably and naturally mistook Jacquelina and Thurston for the bridal pair, and the professor for the papa of the bridegroom. And, really, there seemed a family likeness between Doctor Grimshaw and Thurston Willcoxen; for though the one was fair and the other dark; the one illumined by the sunshine of enlightened thought, and the other darkened by the shadows of fanaticism; the one joyous with love and hope, and the other morose with disappointment and jealousy;—there was a certain general resemblance in form and features, in air and manner, in expression and tone of voice, and above all, a certain high, imposing distinction of presence peculiar to both, that might not strike you at first, but which might readily lead you, in a shaded room, or a twilight walk, or in any doubtful light, to mistake the one for the other.

But Thurston Willcoxen, in carrying out his threat to give the jealous bridegroom an abundance of cause for his jealousy, really and in sober fact only rendered the childish bride such general and unexceptionable attentions as any gentleman might blamelessly pay to any young married lady of his own rank and circle. Yet under the circumstances, *this* was quite food enough for Doctor Grimshaw's "green-eyed monster," who thrived and grew so rampant upon it, that Mrs. Waugh became anxious, and again spoke to Thurston upon the subject.

"Don't you see that the miserable lunatic is half frantic with jealousy? And positively, I am afraid he will grow *quite so*, and do himself or some of us some mortal harm. Now *do*, Thurston, keep out of poor Lapwing's company; don't look at her; don't speak to her; forget that she is in the room; neglect her!"

"But I cannot do that without absolute rudeness."

"Well, then, *be* absolutely rude, rather than let your politeness cause so much misery. Don't even *see* Lapwing! Turn your eyes somewhere else! Now there's my Hebe! Seems to me unaccountable that you should live in the same house, sit at the same table, and be so utterly blind to the charms of my Hebe! Seems to me if *I* were a young gentleman, *I* should not be so indifferent, nor leave a perfect rose of beauty to droop in a close drawing-room, when I might be taking her out into the sunshine, and showing her all over the city. Seems to *me* so! But then young men are not now as they used to be when *I* was young! *Then* there was some gallantry, some chivalry, some loyal devotion to the royal claims of beauty; *now*, any ugly heiress, with a cheek as yellow as her own gold, can buy away the subjects of the very queen of beauty! Yet it is not so in my Hebe's case, either, sir! *She* could be followed, served, and worshiped, I am sure, sir, if she were not *so choice* in her satellites! I fancy you would think so, if you only opened your eyes to see how the gentlemen adore her from a distance! But *you*—a young gentleman of our own party—*your* indifference to my Hebe, is perfectly unaccountable and highly exasperating to my feelings!"

Thurston laughed, complimented the good lady upon her perspicacity, and promised to mend his manners in those objectionable points of which she had complained. And he kept his word.

Hitherto he had, with pain and reluctance, yet as a matter of discretion, and at Marian's own earnest desire, avoided paying her any attentions whatever. His few interviews with the beautiful girl had been stolen, short and sweet; had been snatched by himself in the intervals of other company, when Marian really "chanced" to be alone. Now, however, having Mrs. Waugh's amusing complaints upon the score of *his neglect*, to report to the maiden, he might be able to persuade her to give him a little more of her society, in rides, walks, and sight-seeings about the capital.

Up to this time Marian had gone very little into society; the reason was plainly this—Marian had no wardrobe proper for festive scenes. Her usual morning dress was a fine French gray merino, and Mrs. Waugh had presented her with a pale blue satin, for evening costume; but that one dress could not be worn everywhere; nor could Marian be persuaded to accept another such a present. Therefore, while Jacquelina, Doctor Grimshaw, and Thurston Willcoxen, went every morning to the Senate or the House of Representatives, or to some other place of public gathering, and every evening to some ball, party, concert, or play, Marian, the "flower of the flock," remained at home to keep Mrs. Waugh company; happy in doing so too, was the maiden, for there was a bond of real respect and affection between the blooming girl and the elderly woman. This voluntary seclusion did not prevent Marian being included in all the invitations extended to her party. And notwithstanding her plain dress, simple manners, and retired habits, Marian was greatly admired. And her declining to mix freely with gay and fashionable society was ascribed by some to austere piety, by others to excessive pride, by *none* to poverty! For in Marian's aspect, there was a certain unobtrusive dignity and self-esteem—a certain unconscious queenliness of presence—as one whose superiority had been too long a matter of nature and of habit, to be that of thought or assertion; and in truth, in all personal attributes Marian was superior to almost every one she met; and in her intercourse with others there was a certain involuntary condescension, even as from a princess taught from her birth graciousness as a *grace* —a certain quiet air of reserved power that impressed all who came within its influence, and which worldly and superficial thinkers believed only great wealth and social importance could confer. And meanwhile, never dreaming of the fortune and rank that had been ascribed to her, Marian passed her mornings and her evenings quietly in Mrs. Waugh's apartments.

But between Mrs. Waugh's good-humored raillery and expostulations, and Thurston's entreaties and persuasions, Marian was at length induced to emerge from her retirement and go out with her lover. And now she was happy to be free to give him her company, so happy that her countenance beamed with calm delight, and her beauty grew brighter every day—so much brighter, that it became a subject of remark to Mrs. Waugh, who vowed that Marian had been fairy-favored in some way.

And one morning after breakfast, when Mrs. Waugh had waddled wearily up the stairs to the room occupied by herself and Marian, and dropped down heavily into her chair—and recovered breath, she said,

"Well, Hebe! half the gentlemen in our dining-room are in love with you!"

"Nonsense, Mrs. Waugh!" said Marian, blushing ingenuously.

"No 'nonsense' in the case! I tell you their coffee grows cold while they look up at you! or at least while they sit and gaze, or cast sidelong furtive glances up at our corner of the table. So it must be that they are smitten with you or me. And I hope, for the sake of good taste and sound morality, it is not with me, a woman of fifty-five, who weighs one hundred and eighty pounds, and has a husband besides; but since you disclaim so scornfully, perhaps it *is* me now, and they take me for a widow, and value good looks by size, age and weight I shall put you on the other side of the table to test the matter. And then if I find it *is* I, I shall write to the Commodore, that's all."

Marian laughed, and was glad to escape Mrs. Waugh's raillery by putting on her bonnet and shawl and going down to seek Thurston, with whom she had an appointment to go to the Senate that morning. She found him waiting for her in the drawing-room. There were other ladies and gentlemen present, so merely greeting her with a slight bow, he said that the carriage was already in waiting below, and conducted her down.

When they had entered the carriage, Thurston took her hand, and pressing it within his own, held it a long time in silence, gazing mournfully in her eyes the while.

"What is it now, dear Thurston?" she said, gently.

But he sighed deeply, pressed her hand, and let it go, saying, "I cannot tell you now."

And indeed the rattling of carriages, and the mingled deafening noises of the Avenue effectually prevented a sustained conversation; but when after a ride of fifteen minutes they reached the Capitol, in handing her out, Thurston whispered,

"Dearest Marian, will you come into the library with me for a few minutes? It is quite deserted at this time, all the world having left it to flock to the Senate Chamber, to secure good places to hear the squeaking voice of John Randolph."

"But had we not better 'go and do likewise,' if we wish to get a seat and hear the speech?"

"My dearest one, his speeches are pleasanter to read than to listen to. And I *must* have a private interview with you this morning."

Marian then assented, and he led her up the broad steps, terrace after terrace, and into the portico, and through the great hall, and up another broad flight of stairs, and into the splendid saloon—the library of Congress. It was, indeed, quite deserted, a thing never occurring, except, as now, when some great star of the forum was expected to rise in the Senate or the House. So silent and deserted was this hall, that even the closing of the baize-covered doors, and the soft fall of their steps upon the carpet woke a sort of slumberous echo. He led her up the whole length of the saloon to an obscure and shadowy alcove where there were two chairs and a small stand. They sat down.

"Marian," said Thurston, leaning across the little table that divided them, and looking earnestly in her eyes—"Marian, do you recollect what day this is?"

"No, dear Thurston, not exactly."

"It is the thirtieth of January, Marian, and on the first of February I sail for Liverpool."

"Oh, no! No, no!" she exclaimed, starting as if suddenly hurt—"so soon? I had thought, I had fancied, I had hoped that you would not go so soon!"

"Then I really will not, dearest Marian! dearest mistress of my fate, I will not leave you till you send me away."

"No, no! I would not detain you from duty, Heaven knows. How selfish and inconsiderate I am! Do not mind my tears, dear Thurston! It is only because I am unprepared. You have not lately talked of going."

"I did not like to talk of it. I did not wish to fling a shadow on my Marian's bright brow one hour before it was necessary. But did not my dear one know that I had purposed to sail on the first of the month?"

"Ah! yes, I knew; but I was beguiled by the sweet passage of the time, and by your silence on the subject, into the hope that you were not going quite so soon."

"And was the time sweet to you, dear girl?"

"Very, very sweet to me," marmured Marian, in low, musical tones—"I have always been happy, dearest Thurston—but never, never so happy as in these few weeks that we have been so much together."

"My own heart's darling! is it so?" he said, earnestly, moving his chair around to her side of the stand, and taking her hand, and looking beseechingly in her eyes as he prayed—"My own dearest Marian, my heart's dearest queen, I have one parting petition to make! Will you grant it? Oh! beloved! *will* you grant it?"

"What is it, dear Thurston?" she inquired, in a low, tremulous, misgiving voice.

"Will you give me this fair hand in marriage before I go? You turn away your head—your eyes are full of tears. Ah, Marian, what does this augur?"

"Dear Thurston, I thought this subject was closed between us until it could be opened under happier auspices."

"But I reopen it under a new aspect. My best and dearest one, hear me; this evening at five o'clock I leave here in the night coach for Baltimore. Observe that I stay with you till the latest moment, Marian. At four o'clock give me your hand in marriage, and I leave you from the altar. What difference can it make to you, Marian? It is but sealing, legalizing the betrothal already passed between us. Just on the eve of a long voyage as I am, just asking for the ceremony as I do, what difference, now, if you are in earnest, *can* it make to you?"

Marian did not reply—her hand was trembling in his clasp, and her eyes had drooped beneath his gaze.

"If you love me as I *know* you do, my own! if you are sincere in your wish to be mine! if you are sincere in your intention to keep your maiden vow of betrothal, as I am sure you are, my beloved! *why* object to this marriage ceremony now passing between us, since it will be but a more solemn and binding mode of betrothal, and we can wait as before?" he said, and when his tongue ceased to plead, his *eyes* took up the burden of the prayer.

Never in her life had Marian been so profoundly agitated with conflicting emotions. The color kindled and died on her cheek—her bosom rose and fell as with an inward storm. He saw his advantage, and pursued it.

"You yourself ackowledged, dearest girl, that as you were of legal age, and had neither parents, guardians, nor patrons to whom you owed observance, your giving yourself to me in marriage, would transgress no law of God or man, nor wrong one human creature! Did you not, now?"

"Yes, dear Thurston," she said, in a tremulous voice, "but I said, at the same time, that though our secret marriage did break no law, human or divine, nor wrong any fellow being, yet it would not be *right*, because it might expose us to misconstruction and slander that would give much pain, not only to us, but to those who love and respect us, and whom we also equally esteem."

"Yes, sweetest saint! but don't you perceive that in the case I now present, your last objection is quite obviated? Our private marriage cannot expose you to any evil construction, since immediately after the ceremony I depart—depart—but with the blessed certainty that you are mine—mine forever—my own dearest, *dearest* wife, of whom no vicissitudes, no misfortunes, no calamity short of death itself can ever deprive me. When I should think of you—as when should I *not* think of you? —it would be as my wife—sweet and dear and blessed name! the thought of it would brighten even the days of absence. And you, dearest girl—" he murmured, stealing his arm over her shoulder, and drawing her tenderly towards him—"how would it be with you? Would not the thought that we were bound together forever by the loveliest and holiest bond—that you were mine and I yours forever—say, would it not make the hour of parting and the months of absence less painful?"

Her face was hidden on his shoulder—her form was trembling very much. She did not, or could not reply, and he proceeded—

"Say, darling girl! You love me, I know you do, scarcely less than I love you—speak—tell me—would not the thought that I was your husband, with a right to yourself that no power could contest, and that you were my own adored wife—the nearest creature and the dearest interest of my life, with the first claim upon my heart forever—would it not sweeten even the days of absence?"

"It would, dear Thurston, it would," she whispered, in a low and thrilling voice—"I have no dearer wish than to be yours—yours only—yours entirely and forever."

"Then why not, my blessed one? why not give me the great joy, and yourself the sweet content of knowing that we belong to each other? Love! love! it is my parting prayer—*do* not reject it! for, Marian, how know you but it may be my *last* one? There are—remember!—such events in life as illness, storms, fires, shipwrecks. Those who go to sea may never return again—those who part may never meet. And were my dearest Marian destined never to see my living face again. how bitter would be the thought that she had refused my last prayer"

"Oh! Thurston, do not think of such calamities—they will not befall us! You will return in safety. We shall meet next summer in renewed joy."

"Heaven grant it, sweetest Marian! But now what answer to my prayer? Will my Marian grant it? Oh! speak, dearest girl! Will you let me depart—since I *must* do so—as your husband? Will you let me have the comfort of thinking of you, of looking forward to returning to you—as my wife? And then, indeed, dear Marian, our meeting shall be in deep joy; for then, in all human probability, I shall be free to publish our marriage, and proud to claim you as my own."

His arm still clasped her waist, her face was still hidden on his shoulder, her form was quivering with emotion. She did not or could not reply. Then—

"Remember, Marian, it is likely to be as I say—that when I return I shall be able to take you proudly to my heart, for he is ninety-five."

"Oh, do not speculate upon such a fact, dearest Thurston!—it is worse than all the rest, for it is really sinful, and will draw down upon us the righteous judgment of Heaven! There is, besides, something dreadful and repellant in a scheme of life and happiness that must rise upon a grave!"

"And *why*, fair saint? *All* the life, happiness and prosperity in the living world, have risen over the graves of the dead! The present is the heir of the past, as the future will be the heir of the present. The living are the heirs of the dead, and why regret that, since the dead—if while in life they lived aright—have passed to a still *richer* inheritance?"

"Then let *us* be sure to live aright, dear Thurston, that if we miss the inheritance in this world, we may find the more glorious one in the next!"

"Agrèed! but there is nothing I am so little disposed to do just now, as to discuss philosophy with you, sweet theologian! I wish, in fact, that you could forget it all—it may make you more attractive in the eyes of the grave fathers of the church, though even that I question—but it cannot make you lovelier in my eyes, fair girl. As for the patriarch, let him vegetate on to the age of Methuselah, and I shall be content, if only you will now consent to let the marriage rites be solemnized between us before I leave you. Come, now! What says my Marian, since her last argument is overthown, and it cannot expose her to misconstruction, because I depart immediately? Come, come, what says my dearest girl—cannot she answer at all?" he pleaded, with gentle, constraining force; "will she not answer my parting prayer?"

Marian lifted up her head an instant, and placed both her hands in his, and then dropped her face upon his shoulder again.

"And this is your answer. Ten thousand blessings on you for it, my own dear bride. Bless, bless you, Marian! bless these sunny tresses!" he said, dropping his face caressingly upon her head; "bless this pure, fair brow! and these clear eyes! and those sweet, closed lips, though they would not speak my happiness! and bless these dear hands that came to mine and spoke for them. Oh, God! love and bless my Marian forever! and God banish me from His Heaven eternally, if ever I cause her one sigh or tear!" he exclaimed, in all the fervor and earnestness of a passion as strong and sincere as it was (unconsciously) selfish and exacting.

And so, in the overflowing of his gratitude and joy, he continued to talk to her and caress her, while the time slipped unheeded by, until the adjournment of the Senate sent people straying into the library. Then he arose.

"My dearest love, I have been bewitched. How late it is! and we have so much to accomplish before evening. Come, I must take a carriage and go to the county clerk's office before it is closed. You must go with me, dear Marian; I cannot lose sight of you to-day—our last day."

And carefully arranging her shawl upon her graceful shoulders, he drew her arm within his own, and conducted her from the library and down stairs into the open court-yard.

Thurston gave orders to be driven immediately to the court house, which they reached in about ten minutes. Leaving Marian in the carriage, he hastened into the building; found the county clerk just in the hurry of closing up his office, procured the marriage license, and hastened back to Marian.

He directed the coachman to drive to the Navy Yard Hill, and there, in the remotest and quietest suburb of the city, he hunted up a pastor of a small Methodist society, in whose little chapel, without witnesses, Thurston and Marian were married.

From the humble chapel he led her to the hack, and gave orders to be driven back to the Mansion House, where they arrived just before the ringing of the second dinner-bell.

Marian went to her room to lay off her bonnet and shawl and arrange her hair for dinner. Mrs. Waugh had already left the apartment, and Marian was glad for once to find it empty, that she might kneel down beside her bed and pour forth the fullness of her heart in thanksgiving and prayer—thanking God for the deep joy that was filling and overflowing her soul, and praying His blessing on her husband—*her husbaud*, she lingered in fond devotion upon the adored name—her husband and his voyage.

Then she arose, and in the blessed dream of love she went mechanically through her simple toilet, and passed down stairs to the dining-room, where the guests were already assembled at the table.

Thurston was awaiting her near the entrance. Natural as that act was she had not anticipated it, and her heart bounded when she saw him. He led her to her seat by Mrs. Waugh, and then went to his own.

"You see now the soup is cold, Hebe," said Mrs. Waugh. "Where in the world have you been? It is astonishing to me the indifference of young people to good living. Now the best speech I have heard this season was not half so good as this turtle soup, when it was hot, but maybe they have got some hot in the kitchen. I don't believe you're listening to a word I say to you, Hebe."

"Ma'am!" said Marian, startled out of her dream.

"Oh! you hear now. Well, Hebe," continued the good lady, in a low tone, audible only to her companion. "I believe after all it is *I* whom the men admire, for they have been looking up at this corner just as much as ever, with this inconsiderable difference, that their eyes have wandered continually from your empty chair to the door; but that was nothing, you know. So hide your blooming face, Hebe, for my greater proportions overshadow it," concluded Mrs. Waugh, as she turned her attention to the plate of boiled rockfish and egg sauce that the waiter just laid before her.

It was nearly six o'clock when the guests left the dining-room. Mrs. Waugh went up to her room to take her afternoon nap, having previously received the adieus of Thurston. Jacquelina went up to hers to lie down and rest before dressing to go to the theatre. Doctor Grimshaw strayed into the reading-room to sulk over the newspapers.

Thurston and Marian found an opportunity to be alone in the drawing-room for the few moments preceding his departure. In those last moments she could not find it in her heart to withhold one word whose utterance would cheer his soul, and give him hope and joy and confidence in departing. Marian had naturally a fine, healthful, high-toned organization—a happy, hopeful, joyous temperament, an inclination always to look upon the sunny side of life and events. And so when he drew her gently and tenderly to his bosom, and whispering,

"You have made me the happiest and most grateful man on earth, dear lovely Marian! dear, lovely wife! but are *you* satisfied, beloved—oh! are *you* satisfied? do I leave you at ease?"

She spoke the very truth, when she confessed to him—her head being on his shoulder, and her low tones flowing softly to his listening ear—

"More than satisfied, Thurston—more than satisfied. I am inexpressibly happy now. Yes, though you are going away; for, see! the pain of parting for a few months, is lost in the joy of knowing that we are united, though separated—and in anticipating the time not long hence, when we shall meet again. God bless you, dearest Thurston."

"God forever bless and love you, sweet wife."

And so they parted.

Marian had said that she was "inexpressibly happy." And so she was, as long as his arms were around her, and words of mutual endearment, hope and promise were breathed between them. But when he was really gone—when the last glimpse of the stage-coach was cut off, Marian turned away, and she wandered lonely and restless through the halls and drawing-rooms of the great hotel—how empty, though full of tenants—how desolate, though full of social life, they seemed. At last she went to her own room, and gave way to a burst of tears; not very bitter—it was only the breaking up of the passing cloud of sorrow that naturally overshadowed the hour after parting. And when this shower was over, the sun shone out again in her bright nature—and all was love, and hope, and joy in her buoyant heart.

So that when the sound of the supper-bell aroused Mrs. Waugh from her deep sleep—not a trace of sorrow shaded Marian's sunny brow.

"Yaw-w!" gaped the good woman, only half awake—"is that the first bell? I'm getting tired of this worthless life; nothing but dressing and eating, and undressing and sleeping, and waking up and dressing and eating again. *Yaw-w-w. Oh!* at least for old people. I want to get back to St. Mary's I know very well everything is going on wrong there—and

Mary L'Oiseau will never have the sense to prevent the hen-turkeys going to setting, as ours are sure to do in February if they're not hindered, and then all the young turkeys will be killed by the cold. *Yaw-w-w!* Yes—I believe I have got the gaps." She finished with an awful yawn.

"Yaw-w-w—oh-h-h! And I don't believe it is doing Lapwing the least good, poor, willful, unhappy child! I've a great mind to propose going home. What do *you* think about it, Hebe?—I don't believe she hears a word I say—Hebe!"

"Ma'am!" exclaimed Marian, starting out of her reverie, and blushing deeply.

"What do you say to our going home next week?"

"I shall be very glad to go, Mrs. Waugh."

"Well, child, I'll name it to the Professor, and I think we'll go," said Henrietta, rising and preparing to make her plain evening toilet.

In a happy dream, Marian helped her to finish dressing, went down with her to the supper-table, and thence accompanied her to the drawing-room. But there, as Marian was very much admired, and her company and conversation very much sought, her blissful reverie was so dispersed that she longed for the hour of withdrawing, that she might escape to her room, and there, with the visible world shut out, live her inner life.

Ten o'clock, Mrs. Waugh's bed time, came at last—and the lady, with Marian, retired to their apartment. Good Henrietta was soon asleep. And Marian sought her pillow, to close her eyes and think of her happiness, and dream her beautiful dreams in peace. And there she lay, with her blooming cheek and bright auburn hair lightly pressed upon the downy pillow—the heavenly smile of loving and devoted thoughts curving her ruby lips, and kindling under her dark eye-lashes. "He is my husband," she murmured, softly, smiling to herself—"dear name, sweet thought—it is no dream from which I shall awake—it is the blessed, *blessed* reality. Yes! my husband. And oh! I will be so good and lovely—yes I will, dearest, dearest Thurston! I will be such a treasure to you. You will think there is no other woman like your wife in the world," she murmured over many times, like the refrain of some sweet melody, "I am his wife—thank God! bless God! I ask no happier earthly fate!" And thus she lay, with the holy smile of love half parting the fresh and dewy lips, half raising the snowy eyelids from the melting dreamy eyes, in beautiful visions warm as earthborn passion, yet pure as Heaven's love.

The next morning Mrs. Waugh broached the subject of returning home to Doctor Grimshaw. The Professor was willing, nay anxious to accede to the proposition. But when the plan was named to Jacquelina, she put her instant veto upon it.

"Those might go who liked St. Mary's! She *didn't*—and she should stay where she was!"

It was of no use to contend with the willful one—still she answered, "Those might go who wished"—*she* put no constraint upon any one's actions, nor would she suffer any constraint upon *hers! She* should *remain.*

They had no hold upon her conscience or her affections, and so they had no means of constraining her; therefore the journey home had for the time to be deferred. And thenceforth the very demon of perversity seemed to enter the child. She gadded about continually, flirted desperately, lavished money wantonly. She kept Doctor Grimshaw on the *qui vive* every instant of his life, tormenting him day and night with the most extravagant eccentricities, going into hysterics on the slightest possible provocation, and at the shortest notice, and afterwards screaming with laughter at "Grim's" dismay and terror. Grinding his teeth in bitter rage, he would declare that it was all because that "puppy Willcoxen" was gone, and he grew more acrimoniously jealous than before. So great was the excitability and disorder of her nervous system, that serious fears were entertained by her friends for the stability of her reason. But when any such fears chanced to be betrayed to *her* knowledge, she would laugh her wild, shrill, elfish laugh, and declare that her senses were safe—that she did not mean to go mad until she had first driven "Grim" so—then maybe!

Marian was the only being from whom she would bear one word of expostulation, and Marian, in her grave, sweet way, reasoned with her.

"The life you lead, dear Lina, makes all your friends very miserable."

"Ha, ha! Well, they made me miserable first! miserable forever! I have suffered the greatest wrong a girl could ever receive!"

"Your present course does not make you happier, nor right that wrong, poor child."

"I know it doesn't, but it worries Grim', though!"

"And why should you pursue it for that reason?"

"Why? you ask me why? I *hate* him! Oh, *how* I hate him!"

"Listen to me, dear Lina, for I love you, and I will not wrong you by any vain words or false consolations. You are not happy, I know—under these circumstances you can never be so in this world. I will not mock you by pretending that you can! No, you cannot be happy, but you can be more than that, higher than that, you can be GOOD. Christ, our Exemplar, was not 'happy;' He was a 'man of sorrows,' but He was the perfectly good. Take up the cross of life, and follow Him. Ask Him, and He will give you strength to lift the burden, and make it easy to your shoulders. You will never find peace nor rest till you do. If you have lost earthly happiness do not therefore forsake duty, and cast away eternal joys. Our mortal life, at longest and at best, is but a transient struggle compared to eternity, and no scheme of life and happiness in this world is so valuable and so sublime, as that of the development and perfection of our own spirits. As for Doctor Grimshaw, he has done wrong, but that is past and cannot be undone. He is unhappy, and much to be pitied; judge him leniently as you can—try to speak kindly to him."

If Marian's words produced little present effect, they nevertheless sunk into the unhappy girl's heart, as the words of no other ever did.

And it was Marian who finally prevailed upon the perverse creature to consent to return home.

And so, about the middle of February, the party, taking advantage of a very fine spell of weather, set out on their journey to St. Mary's, and upon the evening of the second day reached Locust Hill.

CHAPTER XXIX.

GOLDEN OPINIONS.

> "'They' have honored me of late; and I have bought
> Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
> Which should be worn now in their newest gloss,
> Not cast aside so soon."—*Shakspeare.*

Marian's return home was an ovation. Had she ever doubted her sovereignty over hearts, she must have been reassured by her reception. Not only did Edith weep for joy at her coming, and little Miriam follow and wait upon her with idolatrous devotion, which was natural and to be expected; but when it was generally known that she had returned to the neighborhood, many friends and acquaintances, who had never been at the cottage before, now called to see her; and tea-drinkings and other little parties were given in her honor.

And on Sunday at church, after the morning service, not only her female companions, but also the grave deacons and elders of the church, thronged around her to welcome her home. Colonel Thornton and his maiden sister were especially kind and polite. Colonel Thornton informed her that, if she should be disengaged the next morning, his sister and himself would call at Old Fields, to propose a plan for her consideration that required more time for thought and discussion than could be given to it just then at church. Marian readily promised to remain at home the next day to receive her visitors. And with mutual expressions of friendship and good wishes they separated.

On Monday morning the Colonel and Miss Thornton called at Old Fields, and the object of their visit was briefly this—

During Marian's absence in the city, several of the principal planters of the neighborhood had met to discuss the propriety of establishing in the village an academy for young ladies, upon a par with the C—— Academy for young gentlemen. In that, and in two subsequent meetings, the whole preliminaries had been arranged, the money subscribed, the site of the school chosen, the trustees elected, the teacher appointed, and her very liberal salary fixed. And now Colonel Thornton and his sister had come as a committee to inform Marian of her appointment, and to solicit her acceptance of the post.

It was with smiles of heartfelt joy, that Marian clasped the hands of her friends, and assured them of the pleasure she felt in receiving the situation they had done her the honor to offer.

The Colonel and Miss Thornton seemed very much pleased by her prompt, frank and joyous acceptance of the post, and arose to depart. And again the friends bade adieu to each other with mutual and cordial expressions of affection and respect.

Marian was pleased, deeply pleased with the proof of confidence she had received, and the prospect of occupation and of independence that it offered. Her school duties were expected to commence upon the first Monday in March.

Ten or twelve days only intervened before that day, and in the course of their passage, Marian received two letters from Thurston—the first written upon the eve of his sailing from Baltimore, and the second written from the sea, and sent by a homeward bound vessel. These letters were long and eloquent, filled with "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn," overflowing with devoted affection and ardent aspirations. And oh! how they were read, and re-read, and treasured by Marian! She, in the new blindness of her idolatry, did not mind that they were subscribed in an assumed name—*Thomas*

Truman—to which address she was also requested to direct her answers. With the treasured letters in her bosom, lying upon her loving heart, she went about in the golden mist of her own happy and devoted thoughts.

The first Monday in March came, and Marian repaired to the village to meet the trustees of her school, and to be inaugurated into her new office. Her school-room was new, well built, well aired, well furnished, and in every respect very pleasant. Her pupils comprised twelve or fourteen young ladies, who had already in the Sunday-school received the benefit of Marian's instructions, and who were now prepared with loving reverence to accept her as their teacher. To her everything was made agreeable and attractive. The high respect and confidence in which she was held by the trustees, the veneration and affection with which she was honored by her pupils, even the pleasant locality, arrangement, and appointments of her school-room—all were subjects of congratulation to herself, and of thankfulness to Heaven.

And not the least among the generous girl's reasons for pleasure and gratitude, was the thought that her position would enable her to systematize the education of little Miriam, whom she at once resolved to take daily with her to the school; while her salary would afford her the means of adding many comforts to the home and daily life of Edith.

Marian's school was soon brought into beautiful order, and her days now passed in serene happiness. Every month increased her usefulness and social importance, and gained her new friends and new honors. The school under her charge prospered so greatly, and increased so rapidly, that it soon become necessary to advertise for assistants. And when they were found and engaged, Marian was at once relieved from the drudgery of details, and advanced to the post of principal.

In the meantime she continued to receive letters from "Thomas Truman," who had reached Edinburgh, and had seen his younger brother, and was then making arrangements for a speedy return to the United States, which he hoped and expected to reach about the first of June. Marian had written a full account of the new academy for young ladies, and her own appointment as its principal. It was of course very long, even near the last of May, before she received an answer, in which he expressed his regret that his Marian should be called upon to labor—his grief that it was not in his power at once to relieve her, and withal his unqualified approbation of any ste she might have thought proper to take, as everything she di was necessarily certain to be right. The same letter conveye to her the joyful news that he was just on the eve of embarkation for the United States, where he expected to arrive in very few days after her receipt of his letter. It was Frida evening, on her way from school, that she received this letter, and from the moment of finishing its perusal, Marian lived and moved in a happy dream. It was well for her pupils that her school duties were over for the week—it was well for herself that her ride back to Old Fields was a long, solitary one. Her trance was unbroken until she reached home, where she found Mrs. Waugh waiting for her.

"I have come over, Hebe, to invite you and Edith to a house-warming at Luckenough on the first of June—next Monday, you know! And, mind, I will take no refusal," said the good lady cheerfully, as Marian greeted her.

Luckenough was now completed, the mansion-house having been rebuilt and newly furnished in the most elegant manner. The family had been settled in their ancient home now about a week, and were, according to custom, about to give a large party.

"Tell me about Jacqnelina," said Marian, anxiously, as she laid off her bonnet and sat down.

"What about Lapwing, my dear? Oh, you refer tc the poor child's resolution to remain with her mother at Locust Hill. Ah, my dear, what chance has she, with all her self-will, to save her soul alive, between her mother on one side, and the Commodore and old Grimshaw on the other? Now, what do you think? Mary L'Oiseau has actually *let* Locust Hill, and accepted a home at Luckenough, for the purpose of defeating Jacquelina's wish to remain with her at that farm!"

"No, no!"

"*Yes, yes,* she has done that very thing!—She has actually had the wicked heart to rent out the very home that her poor child sacrificed herself to buy for her, rather than let that home afford a shelter to that child in her extremity!"

"I can scarcely credit it!"

"My dear, never doubt that superstition and fanaticism are capable of any degree of wickedness! Lapwing is with us. I shall do all I can to make the poor thing happy, even to the extent of trying to reconcile her to Doctor Grimshaw, though that will be a difficult and delicate matter, for the very mention of the subject throws her into fits, and as for Grim' himself, he certainly *is* going crazy. He is, indeed, Hebe! And if a change don't come soon, he'll be a raving maniac! He will, indeed, Hebe! And no wonder! he has just the gloomy temper and nervous bilious temperament, and is placed in just the circumstances, that make men mad. This party, too! The most indiscreet thing that could be imagined under the circumstances. But the Commodore will have it so, and it is not, after all, a thing of sufficient importance for me to make a quarrel about."

"I do not know, Mr. Waugh, how, in the midst of all this, *you* maintain such good humor and good health."

"My dear, I have a happy temperament; when things can be remedied, instead of repining I set about remedying them, and when they are beyond remedy, they are with me beyond regret. Lor, Hebe! if I had chosen to fret myself 'because of evil doers,' I might have been as thin as a broomstick by this time!"

"Yet, after all, Mrs. Waugh, I suppose it does not lie so much in the choice of your will as in the 'happy temperament' you spoke of?"

"Yes. Well, Hebe, I must go. You will be sure to come on Monday evening, for Lapwing's sake?"

"I will be sure to come, Mrs. Waugh."

"And try to bring Edith along. I have brought her her *uncle's* invitation with my own. But Edith is proud and stubborn. She will not be entreated. You must try to persuade her."

"No, Aunt Henrietta," said Edith; "I am not so, but I could not bring myself to enter Luckenough, unless my uncle were first to come *here* and be reconciled to me."

"What do you call *that* but pride and stubbornness from a young person to an old one? I declare there never was an honest, well-meaning woman surrounded by such a set of kinsfolks as *I* am! Indeed, Hebe, I'm not self-righteous, but it does seem to me that there's not one in the whole party worth saving but you and me," said Mrs. Waugh, as she arose, half-laughing, and wrapping her ample net shawl about her, prepared to take leave.

It had long been the desire of Marian to make peace with Edith and her uncle, and the most favorable opportunity had occurred. And as soon as Mrs. Waugh had gone, she opened the subject.

She begged her to reflect that notwithstanding all that had occurred, he was still her uncle; that he had been her first and greatest benefactor; that he had filled a father's post towards her; that when he had cast her off, it was because she had, by her marriage, disappointed him in his most cherished wish; that now he was an aged man, whose remaining days were few, uncertain, and full of troubles; that though he had been, and still continued to be violent, unreasonable and oppressive, yet it better became his young relatives who called themselves Christians, to seek, by kindness, by tolerance, by readiness to forgive and forget, and by exhibiting the loveliness of an opposite character, to ameliorate the faults of his own; that there were no half-measures in Christianity, which includes a perfect faith, hope and charity, a perfect willingness to forgive, to believe in, to hope for, to work for, to love, to redeem, and to save our enemies—or is *not* Christianity. And all this was spoken and enforced with an eloquence, truthfulness, earnestness and momentum characteristic of Marian, and carrying conviction with it. The beautiful girl had the true "spell o'er hearts"—*great moral power.* She had seldom failed in her efforts to influence any one; never in her attempts to affect Edith; nor did she intend to do so now. She succeeded in persuading her to forget her past injuries, and to meet more than half-way her uncle's advances towards a reconciliation, by accepting his invitation to the house-warming. It was decided that little Miriam also should accompany them.

And this matter being arranged, Marian, with her usual cheerful promptitude, went briskly to work with the preparations. All that evening, and all the next day, she busied herself with altering and modernizing Edith's black Italian crape robe, and in getting up her own and Miriam's dresses. Yet, busily as Marian worked, swiftly as her fingers flew, quickly and neatly as her various tasks were finished, all was done mechanically; her thoughts were not in her labors—they were far away at sea, seeking out, hovering around the "*homeward bound.*"

By Saturday night, all the preparations were completed, and the care for them troubled Marian no more, either at church on Sunday, or at her school-room on Monday. And in part, as far as her own costume was concerned, she needed not have troubled herself at any time, for on her return from school on Monday afternoon, she found, waiting for her at home, a large bandbox, directed "To MY HEBE," which, when opened, was found to contain a light and elegant evening dress, of lilac-colored crape, finished with blonde lace. There were also white kid gloves, white satin slippers, an embroidered handkerchief and a beautiful wreath of white jessamine flowers. Marian surmised that Mrs. Waugh had certainly stolen her dress patterns and her shoe and glove measures, to have procured such perfect fits as the articles composing this costume proved to be. There was no possibility of refusing this dress now that it was purchased, made up and sent home, and so, probably, Mrs. Waugh had reasoned. At all events, Marian felt obliged, though half unwillingly, to accept the present. She, therefore, smilingly arrayed her beautiful form in these gay festive robes, and as she gazed upon the reflection in the glass, could but think that never had any dress so enhanced her beauty as this one did—the delicate, yet brilliant, lilac hue, heightened by contrast the fairness of her arms and bosom, the vivid bloom of her cheeks and lips, the azure blue of her eyes, and the warm, rich, auburn tint of her tresses—while its light and floating texture flowed in harmony with all her graceful motions.

Mrs. Waugh's carriage was waiting below to take them to Luckenough, and she hurried down to join Edith and Miriam, who were both quite ready.

Edith also looked very pretty, with her fair, pearly face relieved by the slight, silky, black ringlets, and the floating, shadowy, black crape dress.

Little Miriam wore a black gauze, embroidered with a deep border of crimson lamma work around the full, double skirts, and a narrower one around the short sleeves and the low boddice. A slight wreath of crimson cypress flowers was twined around her jet black hair, her shining black ringlets hung down to her waist, and her splendid Syrian eyes shone like two stars.

Marian smiled with pleasure at the sight of her resplendent beauty, stooped and caressed her, and told her that she looked like some bright tropical bird alighted down there in a Maryland cottage.

Throwing light veils over their heads, and light shawls around their shoulders, they entered the carriage and departed, leaving the cottage in the sole charge of old Jenny, who, by the way, too thoroughly mistrusted and disapproved the whole proceeding, to utter one word of comment upon their going, until the carriage had rolled out of sight, then she lifted up both arms, and gave vent to her feelings by exclaiming,

"Well, Lord! I nebber thought how arter all as had comed an' goed, *she'd* gone to Old Nick agin! But it's all wanity—all wanity and wexation o' de spirit—an' so she'll find it—'deed she!"

In the meantime they were driven rapidly towards Luckenough, which they reached at the usual hour of country evening receptions—early candle-light.

The new mansion-house had been built in exactly the style of the old one—of red stone, with three front gables. And the scene presented the usual appearance of country premises upon the occasion of a large evening party; that is to say, the lawn was covered, and the avenues choked up with carriages and conveyances of all sorts, from the capacious family carriage of Colonel Thornton and others, down to the saddle-mules of Miss Nancy Skamp and her learned nephew. The mansion was blazing with light, and thundering with music, and all the entries and passages were crowded with coachmen, waiting-maids, grooms and footmen who belonged to the house, or had come in attendance upon some of the company.

They alighted from the carriage, and made their way through this unpleasant crowd to a room on the ground floor, corresponding to that which had once been Edith's, and where a serving-woman stood to admit and wait upon them.

There were already a crowd of ladies in the room, all engaged in re-arranging their toilets. Edith soon settled her simple widow's dress, and Miriam's little fiery costume. And Marian had only to shake out the light falls of her skirts, settle the fragrant jessamine wreath upon her hair, draw on her gloves, and they were ready.

And just as Marian was about to send a servant into the saloon to ask Mrs. Waugh to send some gentlemen to take them in, Doctor Brightwell and Solomon Weismann appeared at the door to offer their services. And Edith accepted the arm of the former, and Marian that of the latter, while she led little Miriam by the hand. And so they entered the saloon. It presented just the appearance that all other country saloons do in the like circumstances—it was redundantly ornamented with flowers and green vines, brilliantly illuminated with hanging chandeliers, and furnished with seats running around the room for the accommodation of the old people, the tired dancers, and the neglected wall-flowers. The floors were uncarpeted, but highly polished with wax, and chalked for the quadrilles.

Mrs. Waugh, in a new, brown satin dress, and a white gauze turban, stood near the door to receive her guests. She hastened forward to welcome her friends, and conduct them to a pleasant seat up at the farther end of the room, and after walking a little while with Edith, and telling her how glad she felt to see her, she excused herself, and left them to go and meet some other guests who were just entering.

Marian took a survey of the room. There were about four cotillions on the floor. And at the head of one she saw standing Jacquelina and young Barnwell—her own rejected suitor. Jacquelina was even more fair and fragile than ever—she looked like some beautiful transparency. She wore a dress of gossamer blond over pale, green silk, and around her golden hair was bound a string of small pearls, clasped above the brow, with a single emerald. Few complexions could have borne such a dress, but there was a vivid glow upon her cheeks and lips, and a streaming light from her two briliant eyes, that were, if possible, heightened by the cool, pale shades of her costume. Marian sighed deeply and sent up a prayer for her peace.

But little time had Marian to look about her, before Mrs. Waugh returned, bringing with her a young gentleman whom she presented to the young girl, and who immediately solicited the honor of her hand in the cotillion that was then forming. Marian assented and gave her hand with a smile that turned the young man's head at once.

But little did Marian think or care, either then, or afterwards; for whether she sat, or stood, or danced, or talked, or listened, it was done mechanically; her thoughts and cares were absent from the passing scene, seeking and hovering around the "homeward-bound." At last it almost seemed as if she had won him spiritually to her side, for he seemed to be with her amid the lighted saloon, amid the sounding music and the thronging revelers, and with the thought of him *now* came shock after shock of joy, galvanizing her nerves and heart, and sending the brilliant vital fire kindling upon her cheek and lip, and flashing under her drooping eyelid.

Yes! he seemed there in presence with her, and yet—she could scarcely suppress a scream of joy, when lifting her eyes she saw Thurston Willcoxen standing in the room! Her heart sprang and throbbed fast, the color ebbed and flowed on her cheeks—her eyes smouldered and flashed under their lids.

He was standing talking to Mrs. Waugh and the Commodore, yet restlessly sending his glances roving over the room, in search of—Marian knew whom! At last his eyes found her, met hers in joyous recognition, a smile of rapture lighted up his face, and bowing hastily to his companions, he came hurrying through the crowd to the sofa where she sat with other ladies and some gentlemen. Oh! that such a meeting should happen in such a place and under such circumstances!

He came up, and bowed, and shook hands with several of the persons near Marian, and who were old acquaintances of his own. And when he greeted Marian, there was nothing but the crushing pressure of his hand, and the brief intense gaze of his eyes—that betrayed how much of feeling he wisely had suppressed.

As he stood there, he was immediately surrounded by friends and acquaintances, who came to welcome him back, and to chatter to him, asking him a score of questions about the length of his voyage, the weather he had at sea, the time of his arrival, etc., etc., etc. Thurston answered them with as much good humor as he could assume, while heartily wishing them all at the antipodes.

Marian was also surrounded. Colonel Thornton, Mr. Barnwell and Doctor Weismann had in turn found out her seat, and approached her, and now they lingered near her, each with the secret determination of *out*-lingering the others.

"Impertinent puppies! I wonder how Miss Mayfield can tolerate them for a moment," quoth Colonel Thornton in his heart, while he cast a sidelong, scornful glance at the two young gentlemen.

"Miserable old beau! I wonder he is so ridiculous as to presume to address a young lady," sneered Messrs. Barnwell and Weismann.

Marian blushed to see the look of animosity that passed between them, and to know herself the object of their ill-concealed rivalry, and being no longer willing to endure a position she felt to be humiliating, she arose, and giving her hand to Thurston, said,

"Mr. Willcoxen, will you please to assist me in finding Mrs. Grimshaw?"

With a glad smile of surprise Thurston bowed, drew her hand within his arm, and they began to thread their way through the crowd.

"Thank you, dearest, dearest Marian—sweet wife! thank you!" he whispered in a thrilling voice, as they went.

But the people pressed so closely, that it was nearly impossible to speak a confidential word that would not be heard by others. He did manage to say to her, in answer to her fond inquiries—

"Dearest, I reached home only this afternoon. I made an errand over to Old Fields for the purpose of seeing you. There I learned that you were here, and hither I instantly hurried, an uninvited, but I trust not an unwelcome guest. Oh! the demon! Here comes Doctor Brightwell, elbowing his way through the crowd to speak to me! How provoking! Dear Marian! I must see you alone!

Before Marian could reply, Doctor Brightwell joined them, and, grasping Thurston's hand with a cordial grip, and smiling in his face with the sincerest joy, began to pour forth a stream of welcome, in return for which, Thurston sincerely wished him at Jericho. And before the Doctor had done talking, Edith came along in search of Marian, and joined her. As she had seen Thurston once before that evening, she only nodded and smiled before entering into the conversation. They all talked together a little while, and then Thurston pressed Marian's fingers, with a meaning which she must have understood, for she smiled and said, "Now, Mrs. Shields, pray excuse me, and take care of our dear Doctor, while I go to hunt up Mrs. Grimshaw, who has been dancing so continuously that I have had no opportunity of speaking to her. And now she is sitting down somewhere, and I must find her."

"You will not find her, my dear; she has left the room—she has probably gone in to supper, where all the company are going now. Come, Doctor! Mr. Willcoxen, give your arm to Miss Mayfield, and precede us to the supper room."

There was no remedy; the company were all going one way; Thurston knew very well that if he and Marian remained behind, they would excite remark, so with a suppressed groan, he drew her hand through his arm and led the way. At the supper-table it was as bad as ever for the lovers. If the viands stopped the people's mouths, that circumstance only left their ears the more at liberty to hear all that passed. And Thurston could speak no loving word to Marian. He had no means of relieving his heart, but by occasional sly pressures of her hand —and, forgetting that he must not express the strength of his *love* by the strength of his *hand*, he so clasped and crushed together her fair, roseate fingers, that Marian had other cause than *pleasure* to remember it.

After supper it was worse than ever. The little, incorrigible imp, Jacquelina, whom they had set out to seek, was found then too soon; for as soon as she saw Thurston and Marian together, she shook off Doctor Grimshaw's arm, requested him to keep his hateful figure out of her sight, and leaving him to digest his mortification and jealousy as he could, hurried forward to join them, and to welcome Thurston with an assumed eagerness and delight, that none but a mad man, or what is the same thing, a jealous man, could ever mistake for the "love that doth make cowards of us all." And to Doctor Grimshaw's rage and despair, and to Thurston's ill concealed vexation, the unhappy elf passed her little thin hand through his idle arm, and remained with the lovers the whole of the evening. In a neighborhood where the most stringent and ar bitrary social laws govern the conduct of women, Sans Souci was laying herself open to the severest censure, and she knew it, and was glad to know it—and she seemed to delight in taking more pains to make people think and speak evil of her. than any sinner had ever taken to conceal his sins, and make the world think well of him. But she did not succeed any better than the opposite sort of hypocrites do. No one thought or spoke ill of *her*. The translucent purity of the poor fairy's nature was too clear to all except to the passion-blinded Grimshaw—and she could do or say any extravagant thing that she pleased, and have no severer comment made upon her, than—"How peculiar," "How eccentric," or "That is just exactly like Jacquelina! No one else could do so with impunity."

Doctor Grimshaw's blood boiled with rage. It was with difficulty he restrained himself from going and taking Jacquelina by the arm, and leading her from the room. But he knew very well that if he should do such a thing as that, Jacquelina would fall into one of her violent and really dangerous hysteric fits, and create a scene in which his dignity would be sure to suffer. How long his jealousy and his self-respect might have struggled for the mastery, and which might have finally conquered, is uncertain; for the company soon began to break up and disperse, and Thurston Willcoxen, vexed, worn out, and bored half to death by the pretended favor of the willful elf, arose and excused himself, and left her and Marian sitting together.

Edith now came up, and told Marian that her Aunt Waugh had insisted that they should stay all night; that little Miriam was already in bed; and that Mrs. Waugh had promised that the carriage should take them back early in the morning. Jacquelina, now that there was no more mischief to be done, let her head gradually sink upon her hand, closed her eyes, and went off into one of those long, long reveries, apathies, or trances, whichever they might be called, into which she now so frequently fell. The rooms were now nearly empty, the company having nearly all departed. Thurston Willcoxen still lingered about the halls and entries, until he saw Edith rouse Jacquelina, and with much tenderness coax and assist the exhausted girl to leave the room and retire to bed. Then seeing Marian left alone for a few minutes, he seized the precious opportunity, re-entered the saloon, and hurried to her side, drew her hastily to his bosom, pressed a kiss upon her lips, and saying, "Good night, sweetest and dearest—I will see you again to-morrow," hastened away in time to escape the observation of Mrs. Waugh, who came to look for Marian, and to show her to her room. The chamber to which Mrs. Waugh conducted her guest, adjoined that occupied by Edith, and the door of communication was open between them. When Mrs. Waugh had bidden her good night, and left her to repose, Marian drew aside her curtains, and missed Miriam from the bed. Miriam, ever since her birth, had slept in Marian's arms; this night, the maid, Maria, had, naturally enough, put the little girl in her mother's bed, but when Marian missed her, she went immediately into Edith's room, and, smilingly announcing that she had come for her baby, lifted the child, and carried her and laid her in her own bed. This, late as was the hour, opened a conversation between the friends, in the course of which they discussed the most striking events of the evening, the sudden arrival of Thurston, the strange behavior of Jacquelina, the great degree of adulation lavished upon Marian, and lastly, the meeting between Edith and her long-estranged uncle.

"My dear Marian," said Edith, "his conciliatory demonstrations were coarse, rude and offensive to me, and insulting to the memory of my husband. He excused his former harshness, by reflecting severely upon my marriage, and by implication upon my martyred husband, which was very hard to bear, and it made me regret that I had entered the house.

"Do not say so, dear Edith! his reflections cannot hurt the saint in Heaven, and need not offend you. You were right in coming. And now you must remember that the old man, with all his years, is ignorant and blind, and you must bear with his faults; pity him, pray for him, and love him," said Marian, kissing Edith's cheek, and bidding her good night.

When she re-entered her own chamber, what was her surprise to see Jacquelina in her white night-gown, with her yellow hair streaming around her, standing in the room.

"My dear Lina! what is the matter? I thought you were asleep long ago."

"I *never* sleep, Marian."

Marian took her hand and made her sit down upon a sofa and took a seat by her side, and began, with a sort of instinctive mesmerism, to stroke her temples and smooth her hair.

"How did you get in, Lina?" she asked; "my door leading into the passage was locked."

"But look there," replied Jacko, pointing to another door directly opposite to that leading into Edith's room. "You did not notice that,—it communicates with my room. These three rooms are *en suite*, and were intended—ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! for Professor and Mrs. Grimshaw. *He* sleeps in the other wing of the building, Marian. If they had so much as put the Ogre in the same side of the house with me, I should have taken the clothes line, gone out, climbed the nearest tree, made a noose of one end of the cord, slipped it over my head, fastened the other end to a strong branch and jumped off."

Marian still calmly smoothed her hair, and betrayed no horror at her wild words, but answered gently,

"They would not have driven you to such extremity, nor would you have committed such an act. Your lips betray the real goodness of your heart, Lina."

"*Don't* call me 'Lina,' I can't bear it. Call me Jacko, Elf, Monkey, Imp—anything to remind me that I am a fairy without a heart! and I really *have* no heart to speak of. If I ever had one it was fragile as a porcelain vase; and such as it was—it is broken *now*—though as the careless kitchen maids say—'it was *cracked* before.' Ha! ha! ha!"

"No—it is only your brain that is cracked, poor Jacko. Your heart is good and sound. I should be sorry to believe otherwise," said Marian, laying the little golden head against her bosom, and stooping till her lips softly touched the fair, round forehead.

"I always feel a little less wild and wicked when I am with you, Marian; but, oh! at other times! at other times! the very demon seems to take possession of me. Did you ever see anybody try so hard to get rid of a good name as I did this evening? Ha! ha! ha! If any other woman in that room had behaved as I did, whew! she would not have had a thread of reputation left. There I was flirting as desperately as ever I could with Thurston Willcoxen the whole time, pretending to be so infatuated with him as to forget how to behave myself, and yet did you ever see anything so contrary as calumny? There I was doing everything I could think of to get myself slandered, to mortify Grim', and nobody took the least notice, or said the least word about it. And I really do believe if I was to run away with Thurston Willcoxen to-morrow, they would only say it was 'one of Jack's whims,' and wonder what I'd do next. And sometimes *I* wonder, too! for I feel as if a fate I have no power to resist were pressing me on and on to—I dread to think—what!"

"Dear girl, there is *this* that you must do—justify the faith people have in your natural goodness and purity," said Marian, caressing her.

"Oh! you don't know, Marian. You don't know how nearly wild I am driven at times. I do so hate and fear the Ogre. Yes, both hate and fear him. And so I am single-handed at war with them all, and sometimes wildly tempted to turn and fly."

"But, my dear Jacquelina, will you suffer me to tell you that you yourself are wrong in this. Doctor Grimshaw doubtless acted ill when he took advantage of your position, to marry you against your inclination. But you consented to become his wife, therefore you gave him claims and rights that it is your duty to regard."

"No, I didn't! No, no! I took care of that. I merely gave him my hand in a nominal marriage, to secure him an estate, and my poor sick mother an independent living. No more nor less than just that."

"But, my dear, Doctor Grimshaw also, you see, has much to complain of, and that should make you at least forgiving and charitable, my dear child."

"Ha, ha, ha! *Yes*, he *has* something to complain of! that is the best of it! that is excellent! He is outwitted, isn't he? The lawyer cheated the demon, and a girl cheated the lawyer. Ha, ha, ha! You needn't talk to me, Marian! they have driven me wild among them! And now it is a death-struggle between the fairy and the Ogre! Yes, Marian, a death-struggle! Look at me!" she said, suddenly stripping up her loose sleeve, and showing an arm so thin, fair and transparent, that Marian's eyes filled to see it. "Yes! look!" said Jacquelina, "all the flesh on my bones is dissolving away as under an evil charm! It is his evil eye that does it! His eye, that shines like a wolf's in the dark! His eye, that fastened upon me, even in a lighted and crowded room, seems to devour me! I feel myself withering under its burning and consuming glare! And I declare to you, that if I happen to find myself inadvertently shut up in a parlor with him, those eyes begin to kindle and glow, till he looks just like a panther about to spring upon his prey. And I! a panic grips my heart, and deprives me of the power of jumping and leaping from the window, else I should do it, and break my neck. But these excitements, dreads, terrors and panics are wearing me out, and the Ogre will kill me—that is all. But I wont kill *you* by keeping you up forever, dear Marian, so good-night!" And throwing her arms around Marian's neck, she kissed her, and then disappeared as suddenly as she had entered.

And Marian, forgetting herself, Thurston, and everything except Jacquelina's wretchedness and danger, sank down on her knees, and prayed Heaven's protection, light and grace for the poor, half crazed, half broken-hearted, blind and misguided girl.

CHAPTER XXX.

SPRING AND LOVE.

> "In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;
> In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;
> In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove;
> In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."—*Tennyson.*

EARLY in the morning the carriage was brought to the door to take Edith and her party home. And after a hearty breakfast, prepared by the orders of Mrs. Waugh for them alone, they took leave of that lady and departed. They drove first to the village and left Marian at her school, and then towards Old Fields.

To Marian, how slowly passed that summer's morning. Thurston had promised to see her during the day; he had fixed no time nor place for doing so, so hastily had the appointment been made; but he knew where to find her school-room, and she half hoped, half feared, that despite the impolicy of the step, he might seek her there. And so she could not refrain from watching through the windows the foot-path that led to the door. Through all the forenoon, through all the recess, and through the afternoon, she watched. But he came not.

The longest day comes sometime or another to an end. And at last Marian's work was finished, and her school dismissed.

Not having her pony, Marian was obliged to walk home. She did not regret the circumstance, for the afternoon was lovely, and the walk home promised to be as delightful as clear June weather, evening skies, south breezes, and forest-paths could combine to make it. And more than all was the hope and the fear of meeting Thurston. Yes, the *hope* and the *fear*, for though she desired above all things now to meet him, she by no means wished that the woodland and water-side walks of the preceding autumn should be renewed. And in Marian's once serene bosom, two principles, love and prudence, were already at war with each other.

She had not long to listen to the debate they kept up in her mind; for she had not walked many yards down the lonely forest footpath, leading from the village to Old Fields, before Thurston suddenly emerged from the trees and joined her.

She started and blushed deeply, but he joyfully caught her to his bosom, and kissed her till she dropped her head and hid her flushed cheek upon his shoulder. Then he began to speak—

"My Marian, my *own* Marian, my darling, my treasure—sweet wife, sweet *life*," and many fond epithets besides. "Look up—let me see your dear face—don't turn it away—it has been so long absent from my eyes, though never from my heart. Look up now."

Marian raised her head and glanced at the face hanging over hers with so much love. That face had never seemed so instinct with life and light; so glorious with manly beauty as now. Involuntarily, pride, fondness, joy flowed to *her* countenance also, as she lifted her eyes to his for a brief instant; but then a sudden panic of cowardice overcame her, and down dropped her head again upon its resting place. He pressed her closer to his heart, and pushed back her bonnet, and bent his face upon her soft and shining tresses.

"I want to sit and talk to you so much. Come now. Let us go and find the mossy dell, from which I showed you, through the vista, that beautiful view of the bay. I do not care for the view now, though never looked it lovelier. I care for no beauty but this which I hold to my heart. Come, sweet! let us go to the mossy dell—it is carpeted with violets now, blue as your eyes, and fragrant as your lips—come, sweet!" He drew her arm within his own and led her on.

A walk of about a quarter of a mile through the bushes brought them to the spot which has been described before. They descended by the natural staircase of moss-covered rocks, and sat down together upon a bed of violets at its foot.

Before them, through the canopy of over-arching trees, was seen, like a picture in its frame of foliage, a fine view of the open country and the bay now bathed in the purple haze of evening.

But the fairest prospect that ever opened had no more attraction for Thurston than if it had been a view of chimney tops from a back attic window. He passed his right hand around Marian's shoulders, and drew her closer to his side, and with the other hand began to untie her bonnet strings.

"Lay off this little bonnet. Let me see your beauteous head uncovered. There!" he said, putting it aside, and smoothing her bright locks. "Oh, Marian! my love! my queen! when I see only the top of your head, I think your rippling, sunny tresses your chief beauty; but soon my eyes fall to the blooming cheek—there never was such a cheek—so vivid, yet so delicate, so glowing, yet so cool and fresh—like a damask rose bathed in morning dew—so when I gaze on it I think the blushing cheek your sweetest charm—ah! but near by breathe the rich, ripe lips, fragrant as nectarines; and which I should swear to be the very buds of love, were not my gaze caught up to meet your eyes—stars!—and then I know that I have found the very soul of beauty! Oh! priceless pearl! By what rare fortune was it that I ever found you in these Maryland woods? Love! angel! *Marian!* for that means *all!*" he exclaimed, in a sort of ecstasy, straining her to his side.

And Marian dropped her blushing face upon his shoulder—she was blushing not from bashful love alone—with it mingled a feeling of shame, regret, and mistrust, because he praised so much her form and face; because he seemed to love her only for her superficial good looks. She would have spoken if she could have done so; she would have said what was on her heart as earnest as a prayer to say,

"Oh, do not think so much of this perishable, outward beauty; accident may ruin it, sickness may injure it, time will certainly impair it. Do not love me for that which I have nc power over, and which may be taken from me at any time—which I shall be sure to lose at last—love me for something better and more lasting than that. I have a *heart* in this bosom worth all the rest, a heart that in itself is an inner world —a kingdom worthy of your rule—a heart that neither time, fortune, nor casualty can ever change—a heart that loves you now in your strong and beautiful youth, and will love you when you are old and gray, and when you are one of the redeemed in Heaven. Love me for this heart."

But to have saved her own soul or his, Marian could not then have spoken those words.

So he continued to caress her—every moment growing more and more enchanted with her loveliness. There was more of passion than affection in his manner, and Marian felt and regretted this, though her feeling was not a very clearly defined one—it was rather an instinct than a thought, and it was latent, and quite subservient to her love for him.

"Love! angel! how enchanting you are," he exclaimed, catching her in his arms and pressing kisses on her cheek and lips and neck.

Glowing with color, Marian strove to release herself. "Let me go—let us leave this place, dear Thurston," she pleaded, attempting to rise.

"Why? Why are you in such a hurry? Why do you wish to leave me?" he asked, without releasing his hold.

"It is late! Dear Thurston, it is late," she said, in vague alarm.

"That does not matter—*I* am with you."

"They will be anxious about me, pray let us go! They will be *so* anxious!" she said, with increasing distress, trying to get away. "Thurston! Thurston! You distress me beyond measure," she exclaimed in great trouble.

But he stopped her breath with kisses.

Marian suddenly ceased to struggle, and by a strong effort of will she became perfectly calm. And looking in his eyes, with her clear, steady gaze, she said,

"Thurston, I have ceased to strive. But if *you are a man of honor*, you will release me"

His arms dropped from around her as if he had been struck dead.

Glad to be free, Marian arose to depart. Thurston sat still —his fine countenance overclouded with mortification and anger. Marian hesitated; she knew not how to proceed. He did not offer to rise and attend her. At length she spoke.

"Will you see me safely through the woods, Thurston?"

He did not answer.

"Thurston, it is nearly dark—there are several runaway negroes in the forest now, and the road will not be safe for me."

Thurston was silent and sullen.

"Good-night, then," she said.

"Good-night, Marian."

She turned away and ascended the steps with her heart filled nearly to bursting with grief, indignation, and fear. That he should let her take that long, dark, dangerous walk alone! it was incredible! she could scarcely realize it, or believe it! Her unusually excited feelings lent wings to her feet, and she walked swiftly for about a quarter of a mile, and then was forced to pause and take breath. And then every feeling of indignation and fear was lost in that of sorrow, that she had wounded his feelings, and left him in anger. And Marian dropped her face into her open hands and wept. A step breaking through the brushwood made her start and tremble. She raised her head with the attitude of one prepared for a spring and flight. It was so dark she could scarcely see her hands before her, but as the step approached, a voice said,

"Fear nothing, Marian, I have not lost sight of you since you left me," and Thurston came up to her side.

With a glad smile of surprise Marian turned to greet him, holding out her hand, expecting him to draw it through his arm and lead her on. But no, he would not touch her hand Lifting his hat slightly, he said,

"Go forward if you please to do so, Marian. I attend you."

Marian went on, and he followed closely. They proceeded in silence for some time. Now that she knew that he had not left her a moment alone in the woods, she felt more deeply grieved at having so mortified and offended him. At last she spoke.

"Pray, do not be angry with me, dear Thurston."

"I am not angry that I know of, fair one; and you do me too much honor to care about my mood. Understand me once for all. I am not a Doctor Grimshaw, in any phase of that gentleman's character. I am neither the tyrant who will persecute you to exact your attention, nor yet the slave who will follow and coax and whine and wheedle for your favor. In either character I should despise myself too much," he answered coolly.

"Thurston, you are deeply displeased, or you would not speak so, and I am very, very sorry," said Marian in a tremulous voice.

"Do not distress yourself about me, fair saint! I shall trouble you no more after this evening!"

What did he mean? What could Thurston mean? Trouble her no more after this evening! She did not understand the words, but they went through her bosom like a sword. She did not reply—she could not. She wished to say,

"Oh, Thurston, if you could read my heart—how singly it is devoted to you—how its thoughts by day, and dreams by night are filled with histories and images of what I would be, and do or suffer for you—of how faithfully I mean to love and serve you in all our coming years—you would not mistake me, and get angry, because you would know my heart." But these words Marian could not have uttered had her life depended on it.

"Go on, Marian, the moor is no safer than the forest; I shall attend you across it."

And they went on until the light from Old Field Cottage was visible. Then Marian said,

"You had better leave me now. They are sitting up and watching for me."

"No! Go on; the night is very dark. I must see you to the gate."

They walked rapidly, and just as they approached the house, Marian saw a little figure wandering about on the moor, and which suddenly sprang towards her with an articulate cry of joy! It was Miriam. who threw herself upon Marian with such earnestness of welcome, that she did not notice Thurston, who now raised his hat slightly from his head, with a slight nod, and walked rapidly away.

"Here she is, mother! Oh! here she is!" cried Miriam, pulling at Marian's dress, and drawing her in the house.

"Oh! Marian, how anxious you have made us! Where have you been?" asked Edith, in a tone half of love, half of vexation.

"I have been detained," said Marian, in a low voice.

The cottage room was very inviting. The evening was just chilly enough to make the bright little wood fire agreeable. On the clean hearth before it sat the tea-pot and a covered plate of toast waiting for Marian. And old Jenny got up and sat out a little stand, covered it with a white napkin, and put the tea and toast, with the addition of a piece of cold chicken and a saucer of preserves upon it. And Marian laid off her straw bonnet and muslin scarf, and sat down and tried to eat, for affectionate eyes had already noticed the trouble of her countenance, and were watching her now with anxiety.

"You do not seem to have an appetite, dear; what is the matter?" asked Edith.

"I am not very well," said Marian, rising and leaving the table, and refraining with difficulty from bursting into tears.

"It's dat ar cussed infunnelly party at Lockemup—dat's what it is!" said Jenny, as she cleared away the tea service—"a-screwin' up tight in cusseds an' ball-dresses! an' a-dancin' all night till broad daylight! 'sides heavin' of ever so much unwholesome 'fectionary trash down her t'roat—de constitution ob de United States hisself couldn't stan' sich! much less a delicy young gall! I 'vises ov you, honey, to go to bed."

"Indeed, Marian, it *was* too much for you to lose your rest all night, and then have to get up early to go to school. You should have had a good sleep this morning. And then to be detained so late this evening. Did you have to keep any of the girls in, or was it a visit from the trustees that detained you?"

"Neither," said Marian, nervously, "but I think I must take Jenny's advice and go to bed."

Marian arose and lighted a candle, and bidding all good-night, went up stairs, followed by Miriam. She undressed the child and put her to bed, and then went to bed herself. She had been in the habit of drawing the little girl up to her bosom, and going to sleep with her in her arms. But this night she kissed the child and turned over away from her, to be alone with her own thoughts—to review what had passed that evening, and see what it was that she had done wrong to leave behind this dreadful, dreadful aching of the heart—this insufferable sense of loneliness and desolation. She thought over all that had occurred, but could not find herself guilty of any evil act or word that should have entailed this insupportable suffering. She knew that she had done right. Yet saying this over to herself, any number of times, did not tend to allay the heart-ache. She had so much longed for his return. Well! he had returned, and what was the result to her? Why, that they were more estranged than when the Atlantic had divided them, and she was more unhappy than she had ever been in all her life before. Their parting, and the months of separation, had never grieved her as this estrangement did—oh! nothing like it! "After this evening I will trouble you no more," he had said. Ah! what did he mean by that? What was the *extent* of his meaning? Sigh after sigh agitated her bosom—tear after tear swelled under her eyelids, and slid down her cheeks, until the pillow under her face was wet with them. So engrossed was she by her own grief, that she did not notice that her sighs were echoed from the little bosom of the child by her side. She did not even know that Miriam was awake, until at last she felt a little hand pass softly over her face and feel her eyes, and a little sad voice say,

"What is the matter, Marian? Please don't cry. I love you so much."

Then Marian suddenly turned over, and gathered the child to her bosom as usual, but saying, "My darling—how selfish in me to turn away from my loving child. And have you been lying awake, watching with me, little one? Couldn't you sleep out of Marian's arms? Well, then, now close your dark eyes, and go to sleep."

"But will you go to sleep, too, Marian?"

"Yes, love, I will try. Never mind my tears—something troubled me, this evening, but it is nothing that should vex you, or that you can help at all, so go to sleep."

Miriam was an obedient little creature, and never dreamed of disputing Marian's directions, so she closed her eyes, and lay perfectly still, while Marian put a strict guard upon herself, that no tear or sigh should escape her, and disturb the child.

But, oh, how she longed to go and weep in some solitary place, where her tears might fall without dropping upon and blistering another heart.

At last the blessing "God giveth his beloved," fell upon both maiden and child. So that when Edith came up to bed, and approached them with a shaded candle, she found them fast asleep, still locked in each other's arms. She did not look closely enough to see that Marian's face was pale, and the tear-drops were hanging on her eyelashes, nor did she stay long enough to note the frequent shuddering sighs that shook her bosom.

Marian's grief had followed her into the land of dreams. And when she awoke in the morning, it was the first thing that met her in the world of reality. It was with a heavy and an anxious heart that she arose and dressed herself, partook of a slight breakfast and set out for school.

Miriam, who had stayed home the day before, to rest herself after the party, now accompanied her. They rode the pony—Miriam sitting upon the crupper, behind. As they reached the cross-roads, at the entrance of the woods, Marian's eager gaze went in all directions, in the vain hope of seeing Thurston near their old trysting place. He was nowhere in sight, and with a heart that grew every moment heavier, Marian rode on, looking wistfully up the path, longing for his appearance. Yesterday afternoon, coming along this very path, she had both hoped and feared to meet him. But now the instinct of prudence was entirely lost in the anxiety she felt to see him, and be friends with him again. They rode the whole distance, and reached the school-room without having met one single being. It were tedious to tell how heavily passed that day to Marian. But one faint hope sustained her—that of seeing Thurston on her way home again. At last the school was dismissed, and she and Miriam set out for the cottage. She rode very slowly, frequently looking before, and turning to look behind, but there was no one to be seen. So slowly she rode, that it was after sunset when they reached Old Fields. And Edith said,

"Indeed I would not make a slave of myself, and keep the school in so late, Marian. If the pupils didn't know their lessons, they might go home without saying them, for *me*."

But Marian turned away in mournful silence, more heart-sick than before—wishing more than ever for some solitary place, where she might weep unnoticed and unquestioned.

As passed this day, so passed the next one—beginning in the same feverish anxiety—ending in the same heavy disappointment.

Friday came.

"Surely, surely Thurston will see me to-day," she said, as she set out for the school—"he knows that it is Friday, and that to-morrow there will be no opportunity."

She said this over so many times, that she persuaded herself it must be as she wished. And never had the hours seemed to drag so wearily as upon this last day. And when she set out to walk home, leading little Miriam, it was with the vigilant impatience of one *certain*—yet in anxious haste to meet him whom she sought. But every mile that brought her nearer home, weighed down her heart, and when, at last, without having seen him, she reached Old Fields, she entered the house, and without stopping to speak to Edith, passed up stairs, sank on her knees by the bed, buried her face in the coverlet, and gave way to a convulsive fit of grief. The gust of tears and sobs relieved her overcharged bosom, and then she sat down and tried to reason with herself.

"What is this that has come over my life, and taken from me the control of my own fate and peace of mind? A little while ago I did not know Thurston—my life was perfect in itself without him. I stood upon my own feet—strong, happy, calm, self-possessed and self-reliant—supporting myself and supporting others—needing no comfort, yet able to comfort others—lone but free!—now, heart and soul and spirit—all that is best of me—have gone out of my own possession, and into another's—and peace that nothing could disturb before, is now at the mercy of another's smile or frown. Should this be so? Is this worthy of an intellectual—an immortal being? No, no! no, no! it must not be! I who have done no wrong, must indulge no vain regrets. I who have lectured others, must now 'reck my own rede.'"

It was very easy so to reflect and so to resolve, just after her heart had been relieved and exhausted by a hearty fit of weeping—and acting in the new strength, Marian arose, bathed her face, smoothed her hair, arranged her dress, and went below stairs, where, in the keeping-room, the tea-table was just set, while the tea-kettle sung upon the hearth.

It was a comfortable, cheering scene, and Marian resolved to enjoy it as she had been accustomed to do. And during the pleasant little bustle of the tea-table, she succeeded well enough, but when that was all over, and she took her needle work to sit down by the little stand and sew, the tide of love and grief began to flow back upon her heart, filling her bosom with longings impossible to silence. And she bent lower and lower over her work, and turned farther and farther from the light, as tear after tear gathered under her white lids and stole down her cheeks. At last, unable longer to suppress an outbreak of sorrow, she arose hastily, folded up her work, and with a brief good-night to Edith, hurried up the stairs.

Edith looked after her in anxiety.

"I wonder what is the matter with Marian?" she said.

"Dem ar wexatious, aggroawokin' school galls! dems um! I wish how she nebber tetched to de funnelly school-keepin'. School galls is honey-coolers, chile! *dey is.* I knows. Lors! when I lib lay-sister long o' de nuns, at der school, dem are school galls a'most driv me rampin' mad! I had to lebe, 'deed me! I broke de wows an' run away! 'deed me! I jes tell ole marse, sell me to Georgy; put me out in de fiel', unnerneaf of an oberseer; but for Lord sake don't put me unnerneaf of a passel of 'stractin' school galls—*don't!* else I jes heave myself right away—dar! He hear me good! an' if he didn't like it, he might jes lump it. He t'rowed his 'fernal ole crutch at my head—I dodged, an' it smashed right trew de winder glass—an' sarve him right, too! Lord knows what de forsook ole sinner would a done nex', if ole mist' hadn't o' come in *I* didn't care! 'deed me! I wa'nt half as feared o' *him* as I was o' dem ar tarrifyin', rip-stavin' school galls—dar!"

Edith did not seem to be satisfied with Jenny's explanation of Marian's distress, and before the old woman's wandering discourse was finished, she had left the room and gone up stairs.

Marian heard her coming and hastily stilled her sobs, wiped away her tears, and assumed a calmness she was very far from realizing. Edith approached, and put her arms around her.

"My dear Marian, what is the matter? What is this that has troubled you these three or four days? Are you in any difficulty with your patrons? Please tell me."

"No, no, my relations with my pupils and their parents are of the pleasantest character, I should be sorry if any one should think otherwise."

"What is it then that troubles you, Marian?"

"I am out of spirits, Edith. But I have one favor to beg of you—will you grant it to me?"

"Of course I will, Marian. I promise you blindly before you tell me what it is."

"It is that you will never question me as to the cause of my moods."

Edith looked hurt—so much so that Marian quickly added, "Dear Edith, forgive me, but you know one has sometimes variable spirits, imaginary troubles, if you please to call them so—fantastical ones, if you like that term better—but which they are half ashamed to own, and cannot brook to display. I hope you understand me, and are not offended with me, Edith."

"She has permitted herself to form an unhappy attachment," thought Edith, stumbling very near the truth. And from that time forth for many weeks Edith forbore to question Marian.

The next day, Saturday, Marian busied her hands with many domestic duties, and reasoned with her heart and struggled for composure and cheerfulness. But all the philosophy she could bring to her aid failed to comfort her as much as one little hope—that of seeing him at church the next day.

"I shall be sure to see him there, and then I shall know what all this means. Yes, then I shall know my fate. And anything is better than this suspense. Oh, that to-morrow were come!"

The Sabbath dawned at last—a beautiful, a glorious day, the first Sunday in June. Neither Edith nor Miriam went from home that morning, but Marian sat out early for the village. She walked rapidly until she reached the cross-roads, where Thurston had so often waited to join her—then she slackened her pace, and looked around—still expecting to see him somewhere near. But he was nowhere visible. She walked slowly through the woods, still hoping to be overtaken; but in vain.

"Well! no matter—I shall see him at church—I *know* I shall see him at church," said she, quickening her walk. She soon reached the village, and hastened to the chapel, where she arrived barely in time to meet her Sunday school class. She still felt sure of seeing Thurston at church, and her impatience made the morning session of the Sunday school the longest two hours she had ever spent in her life. At length it was over, and the pupils were dismissed, and the teachers went into their pews Marian sought her own, and sat down and opened her prayer-book to mark the lessons and psalms and collects for the day; but her eyes *would* wander from her book to the doors through which the congregation was continuously pouring into the aisles.

But Thurston appeared not among them. Still—still she watched and hoped. The church was at length filled—the organ played the prelude—the minister appeared in the aisle—walked slowly up, ascended the steps leading into the pulpit—opened the book and commenced the services by giving out the opening hymn. The sacred song was sung—the first prayer followed, and still the watched-for came not. The second hymn and the litany succeeded, and yet he came not. The Bible was opened, the text taken, and the sermon commenced, and Marian resigned all hope of seeing him *that* day either. And oh! who can conceive the soul-sickness that prevented her from hearing one word of the discourse that followed.

The morning service was at last over; but Marian could not have told the subject of the sermon if she had been asked. While the congregation was dispersing, Miss Thornton approached Marian.

"You walked here, I believe, my dear Miss Mayfield?"

"Yes," said Marian. "It was a lovely morning, and I preferred to walk."

"Will you do us the pleasure, my dear, to go home with us and dine! It will give my brother and myself the greatest delight if you will. We shall return to church in the afternoon, so that you need not miss the evening services."

"I thank you sincerely for your kindness, Miss Thornton, but I have a class of colored children that I meet at noon," said Marian, pressing the lady's hand.

"But you should not do that, my dear. You really overwork yourself. Marian, you are losing the roses from your cheeks. Even *you*, incredible as it seems. That will not do, my dear," said Miss Thornton, looking with anxious affection in Marian's face; "no, that will not do. Really, Miss Nancy Skamp should take that class of little negroes off your hands. It would just suit such an old body as herself, and I think she ought to offer to do it. I really wonder the useless old creature is not afraid of being cut down as a 'cumberer of the ground'"

"I do not think Miss Nancy quite fitted for the task, and as for me, work, even hard, continuous work, agrees with me. But you are very kind, Miss Thornton, and the interest you are good enough to take in me, helps to make out my sum of happiness," said the young girl, warmly.

"Ah, Marian, if you would but make such an answer to my *brother*—if you would but let the interest *he* takes in you make you happy! If you would but listen to *him*."

"Your brother does me unmerited honor, Miss Thornton."

Here the approach of the lady's carriage put an end to the conversation. She kissed Marian and entered her coach.

Before the lady's carriage had rolled away, Marian re-entered the church to assemble her little class. She felt a strong temptation to leave them, and walk about the village, to breathe the fresh air, and possibly to catch a glimpse of Thurston somewhere. But she resisted the desire, and gave herself up to the duties in hand. And if there had been a time that week when the weight and pain were lightened from her heart, it was while she was engaged in this work of charity. Her class was dismissed half-an-hour before the time for afternoon service to commence. And that half-hour was occupied by friends and acquaintances who came to shake hands, chat and laugh before going in to take their seats in church. At last Marian was free, and with her eyes cast sadly down to the floor, walked up the aisle and entered her pew and kneeled down for her private prayer, as is the custom among Episcopalians. When she arose to turn and sit down, her eyes fell upon Thurston, seated in a pew opposite. She started, and could scarcely repress an exclamation of joy as she saw him She sat down, and kept her eyes a moment on him. He did not raise his to look towards her; he sat with his fine head a little thrown back, and his eyes fixed upon the minister. Marian heard scarcely one word the holy man said; she glanced from time to time at Thurston, but he seemed totally unconscious of her presence—handsome, cheerful, nonchalant, and turning his careless glance from the minister's face, to rest a moment upon some pretty girl, or quaintly dressed old woman, or some other object of trivial, passing interest or curiosity, but never by any chance towards Marian's pew.

Her mental distress was beginning to make itself felt in physical suffering—in the filling and rising of her heart, the choking sensation in her throat, the fullness and throbbing of her head—the dimness of her eyes—the dizziness of her brain, that made the whole scene swim before her—the faintness, that caused her nearly to drop. All these things she had to struggle against, during the whole of that afternoon service.

At last, while the congregation were on their knees for the final prayer, Marian arose softly, and silently withdrew from the church. She could not bear that any one should see or speak to her in her present state—as would have been the case had she waited the dismissal of the congregation. She drew her veil over her face and left the church door.

A little while she stopped, and leaned against the wall to gather strength, and then hearing the people in the church beginning to move, and fearing they were coming out, she hurried away—anywhere—anywhere where solitude would give her the liberty to weep unnoticed and unquestioned. He had known that she was in the church, and had not once looked towards her—she thought—oh! he really meant it then—meant what he had said—meant not to see her again after that first evening. The thought had the sting of death in it for her—anything, anything, rather than such an estrangement. There could be no such bitter suffering in any other lot of sorrow. Nearly insane with grief, and blind with tears, and fainting with weariness, she tottered on through the forest-path. Unwilling to go home and be seen and inevitably questioned by some one, and needing some secluded spot to sit down and rest her wearied frame, and weep unnoticed, Marian stopped, and turned to look drearily and sadly around her.

She had reached the spot where the little by-path led to the mossy dell—a fond fascination drew her down that path. It would be some comfort to sit there upon the mossy rocks, among the sweet violets, under the dear old trees, doubly beloved now as the confidants of *their* love. She reached the spot, stepped down the mossy stairs, and seated herself at the foot.

A picture, matchless in beauty and glory, was spread out before her—the rolling country, green with the brilliant verdure of June. The distant bay, clear and blue as molten sapphire—the western horizon, with the sun setting behind a bank of clouds, like a range of golden mountains, whose peaks were all ablaze with his last rays.

But Marian saw nothing of this—dropping her weary head upon her hands, she gave way to the burden of grief that had been bowing her down all this time, and burst into a fit of tears and sobs that shook her whole frame. She wept long and heartily, but the tears did not seem to relieve her as usual—they left the aching, aching sorrow still at the bottom of her heart.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THAT NIGHT.

"How goes the night in the widow's cot?
Are the blinds safe closed? Does the hearth shine clear?
Are they jesting together, while *she*, forgot,
Links every thought with a falling tear."

MEANWHILE, Edith sat by her cottage window, musing and gazing out upon the rolling, open country, the calm bay, and the range of golden cloud mountains, whose peaks were all ablaze with the setting sun. Old Jenny came in with an armful of light wood, to kindle the fire.

"I tell yer all what!" she said, dropping her load upon the hearth, and taking breath, "Sam's gwine to be let loose to-night, 'deed he! Sich anudder cloud arisin'! Lord! I pity de crafts as 'ill be out on de water *dis* night—'deed me! Miss Edif! is yer a lookin' at *dat der* arisin' off in de Wes'?"

"Yes—but I don't think we shall have a storm for two or three hours yet; but, Jenny, it is nearly time for Miss Marian's return. I want you to get a nice tea for her; make some of those light biscuits that she likes—the girl has eaten nothing lately."

"Berry well. I dunno as she'll thank me, dough, for breaking de Sabberdy on *her* 'count, nudder, 'deed me!"

"Miriam, why are you moping so? Poor child! it *is* lonesome for you these Sundays at home, without playmates, or books, or anything to help the time on pleasantly," said Edith, to the little girl, who stood gazing sadly from the window.

"It is not that, mother. Marian walked to church to-day, and—I am looking at that cloud."

"True, child, it does rise very fast. I wish she were safe home."

Old Jenny had hung the kettle over the blazing fire, and laid the spider and spider-lid up against the front to get heated, and she now stood at the table with her hands wrist-deep in the dough, and while she kneaded and worked up and twisted off and formed the mass into biscuits, and while Edith sat and mused, and Miriam stood and gazed from the window, the cloud arose higher and blacker and overspread the whole sky.

"Miss Mirie, honey, jest you light me a candle, will yer? it's a gittin' mos' as dark as midnight," said Jenny, looking around from her work.

Miriam went and did as she was requested, and then began to set the table, while her mother closed the blinds, and old Jenny put the biscuits in the spider.

"Oh, where can she be? Oh, I wish she would come," said Miriam.

"She will be here very soon, now, my dear. Church has been out at least three hours, and though the distance is long, Marian is a rapid walker."

"Then don't close the front shutter, mother—let her see the light as she comes across the fields."

And the little girl went and opened the blind.

But just then an awful peal of thunder broke, rolling, crashing, and vibrating through the sky, accompanied by a flash of blinding lightning, and followed by a deluge of rain. With a suppressed scream Miriam started from the window, old Jenny sprang away from the fire-place, and Edith rose to her feet with clasped hands. For a moment the three stood gazing in silence at each other.

Then came another blinding glare of lightning, another deafening crash of thunder, and then Miriam sprang to the door to open it.

"What are you doing, child? Has the storm put you out of your wits?" asked Edith, starting to her side and catching her arm.

"Oh! I must—*I must* go see where Marian is, I can't—*I can't* stay here while she is out," cried the child.

Another blaze of lightning—another peal of thunder, and Edith shuddering, locked the door and withdrew the key, doubting her moral power to keep the half-delirious child from flying out in search of her friend.

"Oh, you've locked her out in the storm!" cried Miriam, wringing her hands.

"No, dear. I have no idea that Marian is out in the storm now. Heaven forbid. Seeing the cloud arising, she probably went home with Miss Thornton to spend the night. She—"

A glare of light as if all the heavens had suddenly burst into flame, accompanied by an explosion, whose tremendous shock seemed to shake the very foundations of the earth, and followed by a fall of water as if the fountains of the great deep had been broken up, and the windows of heaven opened for another flood!

Edith sank down upon a low chair and drew Miriam close to her bosom. Jenny was crouched upon a stool in the middle of the floor, muttering her prayers.

"Mother, oh, mother, are you *sure* she is safe?" whispered Miriam, upon her mother's bosom.

"Yes, *sure*, my dear—she would else have been here long ago."

The thunder still rolled—the lightning still glared—the rain still poured through many hours.

At last, towards midnight, the storm began to abate, and the frightened inmates of the cottage ventured to look up and speak to each other.

"Jes' tell you what—heap o' dammidge done dis er' night, Miss Edif. Well! thank Marster."

Miriam raised her head from her mother's breast, and looked at Jenny in so much astonishment, that the old woman hastened to say,

"Not as der wer so much *dammidge* done, honey, but a-caze we-dem's safe. Now, den, as it's done lightenin' I'll jes' go an' see inter de state o' dese biscuits," and she went to the fire-place, took up the tongs and lifted the lid off the spider, but immediately dropped it with an ejaculation of terror as another flash of lightning blazed into the room, and another peal of thunder rolled over the roof.

"Dar! Lord a massy upon me, what anybody t'ink o' dat? Sam trought he done hab dis chile dat time, *'deed he!* Sam done made me go up to dat ar chimly and take holten dem yer iron 'cerns, to fetch de lightenin', *deed he!* Ah! nobody knows de 'ceivin art o' *he;* but bress patience, I done 'scape him dis time—thank Marster!" said Jenny, as she took a seat at a safe distance from the fire-place.

The storm continued to subside. Muttering in low thunder, and glaring in distant lightning, the "prince of the powers of air" drew off his hosts. And the moon, like a goddess of peace, emerged from the clouds, and all was calm.

"Now, I think you may go to the fire-place without danger, Jenny," said her mistress.

And the old woman again approached the hearth to investigate the condition of their supper. The biscuits were baked hard, and had grown nearly cold, as had also the water in the tea-kettle, for the fire was almost out. However, Jenny raked the brands together, and soon kindled a bright blaze, and soon after had the tea smoking on the table.

But the little family had been too much disturbed and fatigued to eat; the supper was little better than a mere form, and it was soon dispatched, and the service cleared away.

They fastened the doors and windows, and went up stairs to bed. But long after Edith was asleep, little Miriam lay awake watching and listening. The full moon shone brightly into the chamber.

The head of Miriam's bed was against the wall, one side of the window looking out upon the bay; but the foot was towards the opposite window that looked landward, and commanded the old fields and the belt of forest and the cross roads. And the child, as she lay, kept her eyes open and strained through that window, as though it were possible to discern a figure approaching from that distance, or as though it were likely that Marian would come home at that late hour. Miriam did not certainly think she would, though, with strange inconsistency, she watched and listened for her coming, and could not close her eyes in sleep.

At last her ear caught the sound of a light step, near the front door, and then she heard a gentle rap, and a soft voice, saying,

"It is I, Jenny."

"Miss Marian! Marster!" said Jenny, getting up from her pallet on the kitchen floor, and fumbling at the door-lock until she had it open, and admitted Marian.

"Marster's dear sake, chile! who come home wid yer? Where is yer been? Is yer wet? Did yer get ketched in de storm? Marster 'Deemer! how pale yer does look, chile! Come, sit down to de fire, while I rakes up de chunks, an' makes you summat hot."

"Hush—no, I'm not chilled, and don't wish anything, thank you," said Marian, passing through the room, where she left Jenny standing in her amazement, and going quietly up stairs.

There she found Miriam awake and waiting for her. The child had raised up on her elbow, and her large, dark, melancholy eyes were fixed in surprise, grief, and anxiety upon her friend

"Marian, were you out in the storm?" she asked.

"No, love, I was under shelter, and now I am safe at home, but it is too late for your sweet eyes to be open. Go to sleep, love," said Marian, approaching the bed and kissing the little girl, and laying her down upon the pillow. Then she quickly prepared herself and lay down beside her; but the child, who had kept her eyes upon her all the while, said now, in a voice of surprise,

"Marian, you forgot to say your prayers!"

With something like a shiver, Marian arose and knelt down.

So long she remained upon her knees that the watchful child at last began to suspect, that, overcome with weariness, she had fallen asleep.

She crept closer to her and put out her hand, and then she found Marian's face and hands wet with tears. She wiped and kissed away those tears, and whispered softly the best words of comfort she could think of:—

"I love you, Marian. I love you so much."

And Marian, shocked and repentant that her grief should so overshadow this child's young life, made a desperate effort to conquer the weakness, dashed away her tears, and smiling said,

"Never mind me, love. I have been low spirited—and tired out—all persons are at times—but it will wear off—it shall—it must," she added, mentally, as once more she lay down and drew the child's head upon her bosom.

But Marian found it a severe struggle. Many nights succeeding this, little Miriam, lying awake, would put up her hand to feel if Marian's eyes were sleeping or weeping, and, finding them wet with tears, would kiss those tears away. And many days Edith's anxious glance would follow Marian through the house, and her earnest questioning harrass and embarrass her not a little. But Marian had been too long the ruling spirit of that house, not to command respect and observance when she wished it. And Edith had too long been accustomed to look up to the young girl, to depend upon her, to be guided by her, to *now* intrude upon her confidence when she had once said

"No." And so, after Marian had answered her anxious inquiries with "You cannot understand nor help me, dear Edith. You must perforce leave me to myself," Edith desisted forever.

But Miriam, with the instinct of devoted love, watched over her friend. Have you ever had occasion to notice the helpless piteous dismay with which children look upon the grief of grown people, whom they vainly try to comfort, yet despair of comforting? Such was Miriam's sympathy for her young nurse, as she watched her paling cheeks and fading eyes, and failing step, and could find no other way of consoling than by caressing and assuring her.

"I love you, Marian, I love you dearly!"

From that miserable night, Marian saw no more of Thurston, except occasionally at church, when he came at irregular intervals, and maintained the same coolness and distance of manner towards her, and with matchless self-command, too, since often his heart yearned towards her with almost irresistible force.

Cold and calm as was his exterior, he was suffering not less than Marian; self-tossed with passion, the strong currents and counter-currents of his soul whirled as a moral maelstrom, in which both reason and conscience threatened to be engulfed.

And in these mental conflicts judgment and understanding were often obscured and bewildered, and the very boundaries of right and wrong lost.

His appreciation of Marian wavered with his moods.

When very angry he would mentally denounce *her* as a cold, prudent, calculating woman, who had entrapped him into a secret marriage, and having secured his *hand*, would now risk nothing for his *love*, and *himself* as a weak, fond fool, the tool of the beautiful, proud diplomate, whom it would be justifiable to circumvent, to defeat, and to humble in some way.

At such times he felt a desire, amounting to a strong temptation, to abduct her—to get her into his power, and make her feel that power. No law could protect her or punish him—for they were married.

But here was the extreme point at which reaction generally commenced, for Thurston could not contemplate himself in that character—playing such a part, for an instant.

And then when a furtive glance would show him Marian's angel face, fairer and paler and more pensive than ever before—a strong counter-current of love and admiration approaching to worship, would set in, and he would look upon *her* as a fair saint worthy of translation to Heaven, and upon *himself* as a designing but foiled conspirator, scarcely one degree above the most atrocious villain. "Currents and counter-currents" of stormy passion, where is the pilot that shall guide the understanding safely through them? It is no wonder, that once in a while, a mind is wrecked.

Marian, sitting in her, pew saw nothing in his face or manner to indicate that inward storm. She only saw the sullen, freezing exterior. Even in his softened moods of penitence, Thurston dared not seek her society.

For Marian had begun to recover from the first abject prostration of her sorrow, and her fair resolute brow and sad firm lips mutely assured him, that she never would consent to be his own, until their marriage could be proclaimed.

And he durst not trust himself in her tempting presence, lest there should be a renewal of those humiliating scenes he had endured.

Thus passing a greater portion of the summer; during which Thurston gradually dropped off from the church, and from all other haunts where he was likely to encounter Marian, and as gradually began to frequent the Catholic chapel, and to visit Luckenough, and to throw himself as much as possible into the distracting company of the pretty elf Jacquelina. But this—while it threw Doctor Grimshaw almost into frenzy, did not help Thurston to forget the good and beautiful Marian. Indeed by contrast it seemed to make her more excellent and lovely.

And thus, while Jacquelina fancied she had a new admirer, Dr. Grimshaw feared that he had a new rival, and the holy fathers hoped they had a new convert—Thurston laughed at the vanity of the elf, the jealousy of the Ogre, and the gullibility of the priests—and sought only escape from the haunting memory of Marian, and found it not. And finally, bored and ennuied beyond endurance, he cast about for a plan by which to hasten his union with Marian. Perhaps it was only that neighborhood she was afraid of, he thought—perhaps in some other place she would be less scrupulous. Satan had no sooner whispered this thought to Thurston's ear, than he conceived the design of spending the ensuing autumn in Paris—and of making Marian his companion while there. Fired with this new idea and this new hope, he sat down and wrote her a few lines—without address or signature—as follows:

"Dearest, forgive all the past. I was mad and blind. I have a plan to secure at once our happpiness. Meet me in the Mossy dell, this evening, and let me explain it at your feet."

Having written this note, Thurston scarcely knew how to get it, at once, into Marian's hands. To put it into the village post-office was to expose it to the prying eyes of Miss Nancy Skamp. To send it to Old Fields, by a messenger, was still more hazardous. To slip it into Marian's own hand, he would have to wait the whole week until Sunday—and then might not be able to do so unobserved.

Finally, after much thought, he determined, without admitting the elf into his full confidence, to entrust the delivery of the note to Jacquelina.

He therefore copied it into the smallest space, rolled it up tightly, and took it with him when he went to Luckenough.

He spent the whole afternoon at the mansion house, without having an opportunity to slip it into the hands of Jacquelina.

It is true that Mrs. Waugh was not present, that good woman being in the back parlor, sitting at one end of the sofa and making a pillow of her lap for the Commodore's head, which she combed soporifically, while, stretched at full length, he took his afternoon nap. But Mary L'Oiseau was there, quietly knotting a toilet cover, and Professor Grimshaw was there, scowling behind a book that he was pretending to read, and losing no word or look or tone or gesture of Thurston or

Jacquelina, who talked and laughed and flirted and jested, as if there was no one else in the world but themselves.

At last a little negro appeared at the door, to summon Mrs. L'Oiseau to give out supper, and Mary arose and left the room.

The Professor scowled at Jacquelina from over the top of his book for a little while, and then, muttering an excuse, got up and went out, and left them alone together.

That was a very common trick of the doctor's lately, and no one could imagine why he did it.

"It is a ruse, a trap, the grim idiot! to see what we will say to each other behind his back. Oh, *I'd* dose him! I just wish Thurston *would* kiss me! I do so!" thought Jacquelina. "Thurston," and the elf leaned towards her companion, and began to be as bewitching as she knew how.

But Thurston was not thinking of Jacquelina's mischief, though without intending it he played directly into her hands.

Rising, he took his hat, and saying that his witching little cousin had beguiled him into breaking one engagement already, advanced to take leave of her.

"Jacquelina," he said, lowering his voice, and slipping the note for Marian into her hand, "may I ask you to deliver this to Miss Mayfield, when no one is by?"

A look of surprise and perplexity, followed by a nod of intelligence was her answer.

And Thurston, with a grateful smile, raised her hand to his lips, took leave and departed.

"I wonder what it is all about? I could easily untwist and read it, but I would not do so for a kingdom!" said Jacko to herself as she turned the tiny note about in her fingers.

"Hand me that note, madam!" said Doctor Grimshaw, in curt and husky tones, as, with a stern brow, he stood before her.

"No, sir! it was not intended for you," she said, mockingly.

"By the demons, I know *that!* Hand it here!"

"Don't swear nor get angry! Both are unbecoming a Professor!" said the elf, with mocking gravity.

"Perdition! *will* you give it up?" stamped the doctor, in a fury.

"'Perdition,' *no;*" mocked the fairy.

"Hand it here, I command you, madam!" cried the Professor, trying to compose himself and recover his dignity.

"Command away—I like to hear you. Command a regiment if you like!" said the elf.

"Give it up!" thundered the Professor, losing his slight hold upon self-control.

"Couldn't do it, sir," said Jacko, gravely.

"It is an appointment, you impudent ——! Hand it here."

"Not as you know of!" laughed Jacko, tauntingly shaking it over her head.

He made a rush to catch it.

She sprang nimbly away, and clapped the paper into her mouth.

He overtook and caught her by the arm, and shaking her roughly, exclaimed, under his breath,

"Where is it? What have you done with it? You exasperating, unprincipled little wretch, where is it?"

"'Echo anfers fere?'" mumbled the imp, chewing up the paper, and keeping her lips tight.

"Give it me! give it me! or I'll be the death of you, you diabolical little ——!" he exclaimed, hoarsely, shaking her as if he would have shaken her breath out.

But Jacko had finished chewing up the paper, and she swallowed the pulp with an effort that nearly choked her, and then opening her mouth, and inflating her chest, gave voice in a succession of piercing shrieks, that brought the whole family rushing into the room, and obliged the Professor to relax his hold, and stand like a detected culprit.

For there was the Commodore roused up from his sleep, with his gray hair and beard standing out all ways, like the picture of the sun in an almanac. And there was Mrs. Waugh, with the great tooth comb in her hand. And Mary L'Oiseau, with the pantry keys. And the maid, Maria, with the wooden tray of flour on her head. And Festus, with a bag of meal in his hands. And all with their eyes and ears and mouths agape with amazement and inquiry.

"In the fiend's name, what's the matter? What the d—l's broke loose? Is the house on fire again?" vociferated the Commodore, seeing that no one else spoke; "what's all this about, Nace Grimshaw?"

"Ask your pretty niece, sir!" said the Professor, sternly, turning away.

"Oh, it's you, is it, you little termagant you? Oh, you're a honey-cooler. What have you been doing now, Imp?" cried the old man, turning fiercely to Jacquelina. "Answer me, you little vixen!—what does all this mean?"

"Better ask 'the gentlemanly Professor' why he seized and nearly shook the head off my shoulders and the breath out of my bosom!" said Jacquelina, half-crying, half-laughing.

The Commodore turned furiously towards Grim'. Shaking a woman's head off her shoulders, and breath out of her body, in *his* house, did not suit his ideas of gallantry at all, rough as he was.

"By heaven! are you mad, sir? What have you been doing? I never laid the weight of my hand on Jacquelina in all my life, wild as she has driven me at times. Explain your brutality, sir."

"It was to force from her hand a paper which she has *swallowed*," said Doctor Grimshaw, with stern coldness regarding the group.

"Swallowed! swallowed!" shrieked Mrs. Waugh, rushing towards Jacquelina, and seizing one of her arms, and gazing in her face, thinking only of poisons, and of Jacko's frequent threats of suicide. "Swallowed! swallowed! Where did she get it? Who procured it for her? What was it? Oh run for the doctor, somebody. What are you all standing like you were thunderstruck for? Doctor Grimshaw, start a boy on horseback immediately for a physician. Tell him to tell the doctor to bring a stomach pump with him. You had better go yourself. Oh, hasten! not a single moment is to be lost. Jacquelina, my dear, do you begin to feel sick? Do you feel a burning in your throat and stomach? Oh, my dear child! how came you to do such a rash act?"

Jacko broke into a loud laugh.

"Oh! crazy! crazy! it is something that affects her brain she has taken. Oh! Dr. Grimshaw, how can you have the heart to stand there and not go? probably opium."

Jacko laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks—never, since her marriage, had Jacko laughed so much.

"Oh, Dr. Grimshaw! Don't you *see* she is getting worse and worse. How *can* you have the heart to stand there and not go for a physician?" said Mrs. Waugh, while Mary L'Oiseau looked on mute with terror, and the Commodore stood with his fat eyes protruded nearly to bursting.

"Go, oh, go, Dr. Grimshaw!" insisted Mrs. Waugh.

"I assure you it is not necessary, madam," said the Professor, with stern scorn.

"There is no danger, aunty. I haven't taken any poison since I took a dose of Grim' before the altar!" said Jacko through her tears and laughter.

"What *have* you taken then, unfortunate child?"

"I have swallowed an assignation," said the elf, as grave as a judge.

"A WHAT!" exclaimed all, in a breath.

"An assignation," repeated Jacko, with owl-like calmness and solemnity.

"What in the name of common sense do you mean, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Waugh, while the Commodore and Mary L'Oiseau *looked* the astonishment they did not speak. "Pray, explain yourself, my love."

"He—says—I—swallowed—an—assignation—*whole!*" repeated Jacquelina, with distinct emphasis. Her auditors looked from one to another in perplexity.

"I see that I shall have to explain the disagreeable affair," said the Professor, coming forward, and addressing himself to the Commodore. "Mr. Thurston Willcoxen was here this afternoon on a visit to your niece, sir. In taking leave he slipped into her hand a small note, which, when I demanded, she refused to let me see."

"And very properly, too. What right had you to make such a 'demand?'" said Mrs. Waugh, indignantly.

"I was not addressing my remarks to *you*, madam," retorted the Professor.

"That will not keep me from making a running commentary upon them, however," responded the lady.

"Hold your tongue, Henrietta. Go on, Nace. I swear you are enough to drive a peaceable man mad between you," said the Commodore, bringing his stick down emphatically. "Well, what next?"

"On my attempting to take it from her she put it in her mouth and swallowed it."

"Yes! and then he seized me and shook me, as if I had been a fine bearing little plum tree in harvest time."

"And served you right, I begin to think, you little limb you. What was it you had, you little hussy?"

"An assignation *he* says, and he ought to know—being a Professor."

"Don't mock us, Minx! tell us instantly what were the contents of that note?"

"As if I *would* tell you even if I *could*. But I *couldn't* tell you even if I *would*. Haven't the least idea what sort of a note it was, from a note of music to a 'note of hand,' because I had to swallow it as I swallowed the Ogre at the church—without looking at it. And it is just as indigestible! I feel it like a bullet in my throat yet!" And that was all the satisfaction they could get out of Jacko.

"I should not wonder if you had been making a fool of yourself, Nace," said the Commodore, who seemed inclined to blow up both parties.

"I hope, sir," said the Professor, with great assumption of dignity, "that you now see the necessity of forbidding that impertinent young coxcomb the house."

"Shall do nothing of the sort, Grim'. Thurston has no more idea of falling in love with little Jacko than he has with her mother or Henrietta, not a bit more." And then the Commodore happening to turn his attention to the two gaping negroes, with a flourish of his stick sent them about their business, and left the room.

The next evening Thurston repaired to the mossy dell in the expectation of seeing Marian, who of course did not make her appearance.

The morning after, filled with disappointment and mortifying conjecture as to the cause of her non-appearance, Thurston presented himself before Jacquelina at Luckenough. He happened to find her alone. With all her playfulness of character, the poor fairy had too much self-respect to relate the scene to which she had been exposed the day before. So she contented herself with saying,

"I found no opportunity of delivering your note, Thurston, and so I thought it best to destroy it."

"I thank you. Under the circumstances that *was* best," replied the young man, much relieved. He then arose, bade her good-day, and departed with the resolution of writing to Marian, and placing the letter in her own hands at church. He reached home, set down and wrote a long and eloquent epistle, imploring her forgiveness for his rashness and folly, assuring her of his continued love and admiration; speaking of the impossibility of living longer without her society—informing her of his intention to go to Paris, and proposing that she should either precede or follow him thither, and join him in that city. It was her *duty*, he urged, to follow her husband. This was the main point of his argument, and he did not fail to enforce it with all the plausibility and power and eloquence that love and logic could inspire and teach, nor fail to wrest many texts of Scripture from their spiritual truth, and lug them in to support his cause. When Thurston had finished and read over his letter, he was marvelously well pleased with his work.

"She cannot resist this appeal! No, she cannot do it! If she is the Christian woman she professes to be, she cannot refuse to go with me," he said triumphantly, as he folded and sealed the letter, and put it in his pocket to take with him to church. He felt perfectly confident of its success, as he contrived to approach Marian in the crowd and slip it unobserved in her hand. Marian's mind had recovered its wonted tone of strength and calmness, yet this letter shook all her nature again, and for a time nearly threw into chaos her notions of right and wrong upon this subject. It was several days before she felt sufficiently calm and collected to trust herself to answer it. She saw nothing of Thurston during the week. But on Sunday after church she placed her answer in his hands. He hurried to the inn and found a room to read it. He broke the seal and commenced. The letter was characteristic of Marian—clear, firm, frank and truthful. It concluded thus:—

"I will not speak of what I have suffered, dear Thurston—you must have seen how *long*—none but the Searcher of hearts knew how *deeply*. Enough that I accepted the sorrow in all humility. Enough that that miserable and abject weakness has passed, and my mind has recovered its tone. I feel stronger, more patient, more hopeful and more trustful for you and myself, and for our future lives. You say, dear Thurston—and you quote many passages of Scripture to enforce your words—that having given you my hand in marriage, I should now be willing to intrust my fate in your hands, and yield my will to yours in all things. Well—I have no controversy with you upon that point. All my affections and instincts, as well as reason and religion, teach me the same sweet lesson—and I will do so, dearest Thurston, in all things that are—*right*. But this step that you have hastily proposed for me to take, would not be right, as a little reflection will convince yourself. Were I to do as you desire me—leave home clandestinely, precede or follow you to Paris and join you there, suspicion and calumny would pursue me—obloquy would rest upon my memory. All these things I could bear, were it necessary in a good cause; but here it is not necessary, and would be wrong. But I speak not of myself—I ought not indeed, to do so—nor of Edith, whose head would be bowed in humiliation and sorrow—nor of little Miriam, whose passionate heart would be half broken by such a desertion But I speak for the cause of morality and religion here in this neighborhood, where we find ourselves placed by Heaven, and where we must exercise much influence for good or evil. It has pleased Heaven to make me instrumental for good in this community. Thurston, I trust that I am an humble follower of the 'meek and lowly' Nazarene, and that there is no self-righteousness, nor spiritual pride in what I have just said, and am about to say—viz: that should 'Marian listen to the pleadings of her own human heart, and suffer it to draw her into any act of weakness or folly—all faith in goodness and righteousness would perish out of many youthful hearts whom she has taught and guided from infancy up to young girlhood. Do not urge me to the commission of so great a wrong. You charge me with great pride and self-will. In the long, happy years that we shall yet pass together, dear Thurston, you will discover how little of pride or self-will your Marian really has—how much she has been actuated by conscientious regard to principle and duty. Wait patiently for those happy years, that the flying days are speeding on towards us—those happy years, when you shall look back to this trying time, and thank God for trials and temptations passed safely through, and bless Him that no slightest shade of suspicion was ever suffered to fall upon your Marian's head, or weigh upon her heart. Wait for those happy years, dear Thurston. And do not urge me again upon this subject. Be excellent, Thurston—be noble, be god-like, as you can be, if you will; it is in you. Be true to your highest ideal, and you will be all these. Oh! if you knew how your Marian's heart craves to bow itself before true god-like excellence!"

The letter dropped from his hand.

Oh! the sudden fall from hope—from certainty! Oh! the bitter, bitter disappointment and mortification! He had been so sure that he had her now. That letter of his had been such an overwhelming piece of eloquence and logic—he had been so sure of its conquering her! Had he not attacked her principles with her own weapons? Had he not "searched the Scriptures" for the first time in his life, and marshaled more texts against her than ever she could be able to meet, he thought? Had he not appealed to her every sense of love and duty and magnanimity, with unanswerable logic and eloquence?

And now, in the very moment of confidently expected triumpn. to have his letter coolly, and gently, and firmly set aside, and himself bidden to stand off and wait!

To wait! How long? Years on years, perhaps, while *she*, the cool, collected, passionless girl! would pass on with her sweet smile and pure eyes—mocking and maddening him with her calm beauty! Oh! the strong currents and counter-currents of emotion and of thought! how they warred upon each other—how they set in, and dashed and roared against each other, whelming his reason in a whirlpool of passion! Many voices spoke, but their tones could be scarcely heard amid the chaos.

"Listen to her—she is wise and right. This beautiful woman is the angel of your life! She came to draw you up to heights of moral glory undreamed of by you," whispered the pure spirit of true love.

"She is not! She is selfish, cold and calculating—without ardor, without enthusiasm, without abandon, without any womanly quality, except the beauty that has driven me mad! She is full of pride—all sorts of pride—personal pride, social pride, spiritual pride! And by my tortures! that pride should be humbled! A haughty, self-righteous, she-pharisee!" growled the demon of selfish passion.

And Thurston started up, and paced the room with rapid strides—and then finding the apartment too small to contain the storm of passion he had raised, he burst out of the room, mounted his horse, and rode home as for life. Then he hurried to his own chamber and seized his pen, and sat down and dashed off page after page of a long, interminable letter to

Marian. And then, having so far relieved his excitement, he sat back in his chair, and smiled scornfully at himself and her—muttering—

"What is the use? This will not alter the case in the least Were I to send it, she would reply as coolly as before—and still pass me with her calm lips and calm eyes as unruffled as ever. I am a fool! A duplicate Doctor Grimshaw! Actions, not words, should be my course! Am I not her husband? Have I not a right to this beautiful rebel? I will hesitate no longer! I will carry her off!" And Thurston tore up his long letter, and sat down, with his elbows on his writing-desk and his forehead in his hands, to organize a plan.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE VILLAGE POSTMISTRESS—THE INTERCEPTED LETTER.

> "Let us see—
> Leave gentle wax! and manners blame us not,
> To know our enemies' minds we rip their hearts;
> Their *paper* is more lawful."—*Shakspeare.*

"No! The mail *isn't* come yet! leastways it isn't *opened* yet! Fan that fire, you little black imp, you! and make that kittle bile, if you don't, I shall never git this wafer soft! and then I'll turn you up, and give you sich a switching as ye never had in your born days! for I wont be trampled on by you any longer! you little black willyan, you! 'Scat! you hussy! get out o' my way, before I twist your neck for you!"

The first part of this oration was delivered by Miss Nancy Skamp, to some half-dozen negro grooms who were cooling their shins while waiting for the mail, before she closed the doors and windows of the post-office; the second part was addressed to Chizzle, her little negro waiter—and the third, concluding sentence, emphasized by a smart kick, was bestowed upon poor Molly, the mottled cat. The village post-office was kept in the lower front room of the little lonely house on the hill, occupied by the solitary spinster. The village post-office establishment consisted principally of three important officials—namely, Miss Nancy Skamp, post-master; Chizzle, first assistant post-master; and Pussy, the second assistant. The obligatory duty of the head of the department was to open the *mails*—the voluntarily assumed one was to open the *letters also*. The duty of the *first* assistant was to keep the fire burning and the water boiling, and to hold the letters with the wafers to the steaming spout until they were soft enough to be opened without fracture. The office of the *second* assistant was a sinecure—her labors being seldom extended beyond the clawing off the envelope of some newspaper during a fit of absent-minded purring.

It is no wonder that Miss Nancy Skamp's temper was unusually tried upon this occasion. There had been for several weeks past, an unusual dearth of piquant or mysterious letters, consequently a plentiful scarcity of scandalous news. The mails upon this day were also unusually late, the day was bitterly cold, and the waiters outside uncommonly impatient and clamorous. The mail-bags were stuffed remarkably full, and there were several wonderful letters, that she felt it her duty to open and read before sending to their owners. In addition to all this—(everybody knows that petty vexations *always* come in swarms)—the fire of green bass wood would not burn—the kettle would not boil—the "little black willyan" vainly fanned great clouds of smoke and ashes all over her head, into her face, and down her throat; and the negroes outside grew every moment more vociferous—stamping on the piazza to keep their feet warm, rapping with the ends of riding whips on the door to hurry the post-mistress, and calling out to know if the mail were not opened yet.

"Will ye take your letters now, or will ye wait till ye get 'em--hey?" asked the worthy post-mistress, as she shuffled said letters in her hand, laying carefully aside those *suspended* for her private reading, and muttering in a low voice alternately to herself and to Chizzle.

"Le'see now, what's this? oh! a double letter for Colone. Thornton—pshaw! that's all about political stuff! Who cares about reading *that? I* don't! He may have it to-night if he *wants* it! Stop! what's this? Lors! it's a *thribble* letter for—for Marian Mayfield! And from furrin parts, too! Now I wonder—(Can't you stop that caterwauling out there?" she said raising her voice. "Sposen you niggers were to wait till I open the office. I reckon you'd get your letters just as soon.) Who can be writing from furrin parts to Marian Mayfield? Taint the hand-writin' of that Thomas Truman that used to write to her in Hebrew or Greek, or some other ungodly lingo, as I couldn't make head nor tail of—leastways, *yes I could* make head and tail of it, too, caze the head was 'Chere Marian,' which I spose meant Cherry Marian, in compliment to her lips; and the tail was—Votre Thomas Truman, which I s'pose was—'Vote for Thomas Truman,' which might o' bin his way of popping the question for aught *I* know, or ever *shall* know as long as the world stands, I do s'pose! But I couldn't make any more of it! and never *shall* as long as I live, I do reckon! I 'clare to man, it makes me mad every time I think o' the fraud as was put upon me! Shameful! for people to be writin' in Hebrew and Greek, and sich unchristian language as people can't make nothin' of! Where there's anything to be hidden and disguised it's something evil—where there's secresy there's guilt—I know that myself. *Hish-ish-ish! Lors! I do b'lieve I was talkin' loud.* An' I shouldn't wonder if some o' them creeturs wa'nt a-peeping through the keyhole. I wouldn't have 'em do it for the whole world—it would ruin me. Say! you little black imp! *Hish-ish-ish! did you stuff wool tight in that keyhole?*"

"Yes, Mis'."

"Very well, that's right! Yes! where there's mystery there's guilt, that stands to reason! *Will* you beat the doors and windows down, then?"

"Please, Miss Nancy, Colonel Thornton is waiting out here, Miss, if you please," said a negro's voice.

"Can't help it if *two* Colonel Thorntons wait *twice* over! I reckon I can't open the *office* till I open the *mail!* Then turning to her work and muttering absently she said, "here's three newspapers for Miss Thornton—shant have *them* till I read them first, *no* how. I aint going to be so 'frauded of my rights, nuther! deed aint I! I spose people think they can trample on me, cause I'm a poor, lone 'oman. I'll show 'em!"

"Miss Nancy, here's Dr. Brightwell waiting too."

"Let Dr. Brightwell wait till I send for him."

"Here comes Mr. Thurston Willcoxen in a hurry."

"'Spose Mr. Thurston Willcoxen stays till his hurry's over!"

"Please, mum, if here don't ride Commodore Waugh."

"Commodore Waugh! Oh, Lors! now the game *is* up!" said Miss Nancy, lowering her tone, "*I* shill have to open the door anyhow, I do s'pose, letters or no letters! That old willyan would batter the walls down, and blow the roof off the house for a trifle! jest as liefs do it as not. The old brute! Threatened to have me turned out of office! The old monster! To go to parsecute a poor, lone 'oman! And here he comes as sure as fate. Stay! let me hide this here letter of Marian's, and these three newspapers of Miss Thornton's. I reckon them are all I shill care 'bout readin' of to-night. And they may have the rest on 'em, the greedy souls! how eager they are to grab!——Well, then, yes!" she said, raising her voice, "Tell the Commodore yes! the mail *is* ready, and here are two letters from Baltimore for him."

The window shutters and the door were opened, daylight and the crowd were admitted together, and the letters and papers (with the exception of those detained by Miss Nancy for her private reading) were distributed. And in half-an-hour the office was cleared, and the crowd dispersed.

Colonel Thornton carried disappointment instead of newspapers home. Miss Thornton passed a heavy evening, for want of fresh reading. But Marian the most seriously defrauded of all—Marian slept in peace, not dreaming of that intercepted letter, which, had it reached its destination, would have placed her upon the pinnacle of fortune, and—as firmly as mere wealth and power can combine to do it—upon the pinnacle of happiness also!

When her unruly visitors had all withdrawn, and when Miss Nancy had closed up for the night, discussed her cup of tea and slice of toast, trimmed the fire, which, after sobbing all the afternoon, at last burst into a bright flame, swept the hearth-and drawn her little candlestand up before it, she took out the letter directed to Marian, opened, and began to read it. And as she read, her eyes and mouth grew wider and wider with astonishment, and her wonder broke forth in frequent exclamations of—"*M—y* conscience! *Well* now! Who'd a' *dreamt* of it! Pity but I'd a let Solomon court her when he wanted to—but Lors! how did *I* ever know that she'd—*M—y* conscience!" &c., &c. So great was her wonder, so deep her absorption by it, that she forgot all about Miss Thornton's papers, and left them in their envelopes.

Her fit of abstraction was at last broken by a smart rap at the door.

She started and turned pale, like the guilty creature that she was.

The rap was repeated sharply.

She jumped up, hustled the purloined letters and papers out of sight, and stood waiting.

The rap was reiterated loudly and authoritatively.

"Who's that?" she asked, trembling violently.

"It's *me*, Aunt Nancy! Do for goodness sake don't keep a fellow out here in the storm till he's nearly perished. It's coming on to hail and snow like the last judgment!"

"Oh! it's you, is it, Sol? I didn't know but what it was ——Do for mercy's sake don't be talking about the last judgment, and such awful things—I declare to man, you put me all of a trimble," said Miss Nancy, by way of accounting for her palpitations, as she unbarred the door, and admitted her learned nephew. Doctor Solomon Weismann seemed dreadfully downhearted as he entered. He slowly stamped the snow from his boots, shook it off his clothes, took off his hat and his over coat, and hung them up, and spoke—never a word! Then he drew his chair right up in front of the fire, placed a foot on each andiron, stooped over, spread his palms over the kindly blaze, and still spoke—never a word!

"Well! I'd like to know what's the matter with *you* to-night," said Miss Nancy, as she went about the room looking for her knitting.

But the doctor stared silently at the fire.

"It's the latest improvement in politeness—I shouldn't wonder—not to answer your elders when they speak to you."

"Were you saying anything to me, aunt Nancy?"

"'Was I saying anything to you, aunt Nancy?' Yes I was! I was asking you what's the matter?"

"Oh! I never was so dreadfully low-spirited in my life, aunt Nancy."

"And what should a young man like you have to make him feel low-spirited, I should like to know? Moping about Marian, I shouldn't wonder. Well! I aint hard on young people, and if you *must* have her, why, I suppose—"

"Oh, pshaw! Aunt Nancy, you always think a fellow's in love. If I were an old lady like you, I wouldn't be always thinking of that."

"'Old lady' indeed, you impident puppy you! Let me tell you, I am in the prime of life, sir!"

"Very well, aunt Nancy; but falling in love belongs to the *immaturity* of life."

"I should like to know what you're talking about, you conceited fellow you! But ever since you got your diploma, you've been so much too knowing for me that I can't understand more than half you say."

"No matter, aunt Nancy, I am really too dreadfully depressed to quarrel with you!"

"Quarrel! Goodness knows, *I* don't want to quarrel! If everybody hated quarrelling as I do, it would be a peaceable world! Only don't throw out any more slurs about age, if you please. And now tell me, what makes you so dreadful down in the mouth?"

"Oh, don't ask me! By Granny! I should think you might know! This neighborhood is so healthy, it's enough to make a fellow go out and hang himself! There's not three cases of sickness in the whole district!"

"'*Tis* bad!" said Miss Nancy, seriously. "But never mind, Solomon, trust in Providence. Now this hail-storm will do something for you. I don't doubt there'll be several cases of cold, and rheumatism, and pleurisy, 'specially 'mong the nigger men as has to expose themselves."

"Not a bit of it! They're all so strong they'll *stand* the storm," said the doctor, morosely.

"Oh! you're so desponding! Well, anyhow, here's Christmas and New Year at hand, and folks will gormandize so that they'll be *sure* to be ill!"

"Don't believe it! People are so hearty now, they'll stuff and digest like anacondas! Tell me!"

"Oh! you're down in the cellar now! You're in one of your hopeless moods. Why can't you have faith and hope as *I* have? Consider now how many balls and parties will be given these holidays, and how the ladies will change their warm, every-day clothes for ball dresses, and dance till they get heated, and then go out in the cold air. I'll warrant there'll be a plenty of catarrhs, and sore throats, and galloping consumptions—never fear—keep a stiff upper lip!"

"Aunt Nancy, you're enough to make a fellow shudder! A fellow aint the foul fiend, if he *is* an ambitious young doctor!"

"Why? I don't tell *you* to make people expose themselves and get ill; but if they *will* do it, you can help them, and thank Providence for the chance—that's all."

"They aint going to expose themselves and get ill for my sake! the world's selfish," said Solomon, bitterly. "I feel *put upon* by fate! I do so! Here I haven't had but two patients the whole season! And such patients as *they* were, too! One was old Mr. Willcoxen! And how do you think he served me? Why, after I had tended him four months, for the palsy, and helped him a great deal, too—when I handed him my bill, he flew into a passion, called me a humbug, swore I made him worse, refused to pay, and forbid me the house! And the other one is Jacquelina—who is enough to ruin *any* doctor! She wont get a bit better. And while I am feeling her pulse, she makes up a look as solemn as an owl's, and stares right into my eyes in such a way, that it is as much as ever I can do to help bursting right out laughing in her face! I have to think of the hour of death, and the day of judgment, and everlasting perdition; and if *they* wont do—I have to think of my *board bill*, in order to maintain professional gravity! She'll ruin me yet, I know she will! I know she laughs at me in her sleeve, and ridicules me behind my back! And she the only patient I have got, or am likely to get. All the women take such precious good care of themselves!"

"Yes, I know that! And do you know who has taught them all that self-care! I'll tell you! It's just Marian Mayfield! and it's *her* fault that the people are so healthy, too! With her 'word spoken in season!' and her 'line upon line, and precept upon precept.' Wonder who sent *her* as a missionary among us? Just see now what a change she's made among the girls! Time was when young ladies about here, dressed *like* young ladies and not like old women. And when they wore nice kid slippers, and fine clock stockings, instead of the thick worsted hose and seal-skin boots. And when they wore pretty bare arms and necks, instead of being covered up like their grandmothers. Time was when they used to drink tea and coffee like Christians; not new milk, like young calves. But it's no use talking, they're all Marian-*mad*. Look at that old noodle, Colonel Thornton! anybody'd think it was a Queen he was bending to!"

"There's not a pulpit in this county disseminates as strong an influence as Marian's school chair!" said the young doctor, emphatically.

"Well—I aint denying that. And the girl is a good girl enough, if she'd only mind her own business, and not let people spoil her. And, as I was saying before, if you *do* like her, and *must* have her, why I shan't make no further objections."

Here the young doctor, who had been gazing moodily into the fire, turned shortly around and stared at his aunt in unmeasured astonishment!

"Hem!" said Miss Nancy, looking confused, "well, yes, *I* did oppose it once, certainly, but that was because you were both poor."

"And we are both poor still, for aught that I can see, and likely to continue so."

"*Hish-ish!* no you're not! leastways, *she's* not. I've got something very strange to tell you," said Miss Nancy, mysteriously drawing her chair up close to her nephew, and putting her lips to his ear, and whispering—"Hish-ish!"

"'*Hish-ish!*' What are you 'hish-ish'ing for, Aunt Nancy, *I'm* not saying anything, and your breath spins into a fellow's ear enough to give him an ear-ache!" said Doctor Solomon, jerking his head away.

"Don't talk so loud? You make me scarey as anything!"

"*I'm not* talking loud, Aunt Nancy! I wonder what you're up to!"

"*Hish-ish!*"

"Now there's 'hish-ish!' again right into my ear like a gimblet! I declare I'd rather be out in the storm!"

"*Hish-ish!* don't talk."

"*I'm* not talking!"

"You *are*—you *keep on* talking! put a seal upon your lips, and listen to me! but are you sure you wont tell!"

"Tell! *no!* what am *I* to tell!"

"There—now you're talking again! *Hish-ish-ish!*"

With a spring and a groan, Doctor Solomon clapped one hand to his afflicted ear, and the other over his lips, with the desperate resolution to seal the one and save the other in perfect silence.

"Now then listen—Marian Mayfield has got a fortune left to ner."

Miss Nancy paused to see the effect of this startling piece of news upon her companion.

But the doctor was not sulky, and upon his guard; so after an involuntary slight start, he remained perfectly still. Miss Nancy was disappointed by the calm way in which he took this marvelous revelation. However, she went on to say:

"Yes! a fortune left her, by a grand uncle, a bachelor, who died intestate, in Wiltshire, England. Now, what do you think of that! Why don't you speak? I declare I never saw such a log; can't you speak?"

"You told me not to *talk*, just now. I declare it's very hard to please *you!*"

"*Hish-ish!*"

"Ugh!" cried the doctor, starting and clapping his hand to his ear again.

"I meant you must not talk loud enough for anybody to hear that might be listening. Now then speak *low*, and tell me what you think about Marian's having that fortune left her."

"Why, I think if she wouldn't have me when she was *poor*, she wont be apt to do it now she's *rich.*"

"Ah! but you see, she don't know a word of it!"

"How do *you* know it then?"

"*Hish-ish!* I'll tell you if you will never tell. Oh, Lors no, you mustn't indeed! You wouldn't, I know, 'cause it would ruin us! Listen—"

"Now, Aunt Nancy, don't be letting me into any of your capital crimes and hanging secrets—don't! because I don't want to hear them, and I wont, neither! I aint used to such! and I'm afraid of them, too!"

"'Fraid 'o what? Nobody can prove it," answered Miss Nancy, a little incoherently.

"*You* know what better than I do, Aunt Nancy; and let me tell you, you'd better be careful! The eyes of the community are upon you."

"Let 'em prove it! Let 'em prove it! They aint got no witnesses! Chizzle and the cat aint no witnesses," said Miss Nancy, obscurely; "let 'em do their worst! I reckon *I* know something about law as well as they do! if I *am* a lone 'oman!"

"They can procure your removal from office without proving anything against you except unpopularity."

"That's Commodore Waugh's plan! the ugly, wicked, old buggaboo! 'Taint such great shakes of an office neither, the dear knows!"

"Never mind, Aunt Nancy, mend your ways, and maybe they'll not disturb you. And don't tell me any of your capital secrets, because *I* might be summoned as a witness against you, which would not be so agreeable to my feelings—you understand! And now tell me if you are absolutely certain that Miss Mayfield has had that fortune left her. But stop! *don't tell me how you found it out!*"

"Well, yes, I *am* certain—*sure*, she has a great fortune left her. I have the positive proofs of it. And, moreover, nobody in this country don't know it but *my*self—and *you*. And now I tell you, don't hint the matter to a soul. Be spry! dress yourself up jam! and go a courting before anybody else finds it out!"

"But that would scarcely be honorable either," demurred the doctor.

"You're mighty particular! Yes, it *would*, too! jest you listen to me! Now if so be we were to go and publish about Marian's fortune, we'd have a whole herd of fortune hunters, who don't care a cent for anything *but* fortune, running after and worrying the life out of her, and maybe one of them marrying of her, and spending of her money, and bringing of her to poverty, and breaking of her heart. Whereas, if we keep the secret of the estate to ourselves, *you*, who desarve her, because you 'counted her all the same when she was *poor*, and who'd take good care of her property, and *her*, *too*—would have her all to yourself, and nobody to interfere. Don't you see?"

"Well, to be sure—when one looks at the thing in *that* light—" deliberated the sorely tempted lover.

"Of course! And *that's* the only light *to* look at it in! Don't you see? Why, by gracious! it seems to me as if we were doing Marian the greatest favor."

In the meantime Marian's heart was weighed down by a new cause of sorrow and anxiety. Thurston never approached her now either in person, or by letter. She never saw him except at the church, the lecture room, or in mixed companies, where he kept himself aloof from her and devoted himself to the beautiful and accomplished heiress Angelica Le Roy, to whom rumor gave him as an accepted suitor.

So free was Marian's pure heart from jealousy or suspicion, that these attentions bestowed by Thurston, and these rumors circulated in the neighborhood, gave her no uneasiness. For though she had, for herself, discovered him to be passionate and impetuous, she believed him to be sound in principle. But when again and again she saw them together, at church, at lecture, at dinner parties, at evening dances; when at all the Christmas and New Year festivities, she saw her escorted by him; when she saw him ever at her side with a devotion as earnest and ardent as it was perfectly respectful; when she saw him bend and whisper to the witching girl and hang delighted on her "low replies," her own confidence was shaken. What could he mean? Was it possible, that instead of being merely impulsive and erring, he was deliberately wicked? No, no, never! Yet, what could be his intentions? Did he really wish to win Angelica's heart? Alas, whether he wished so or not, it was but too evident to all that he had gained her preference. In her blushing cheek and downcast eyes, and tremulous voice and embarrassed manner, when he was present—in her abstracted mind, and restless air and wandering glances when he was absent, the truth was but too clear.

Marian was far too practical to speculate when she should act. It was clearly her duty to speak to Thurston on the subject, and repugnant as the task was, she resolved to perform it It was sometime before she had the opportunity.

But at last, one afternoon in February, she chanced to meet Thurston on the sea beach. After greeting him, she candidly opened the subject. She spoke gently and delicately, but firmly and plainly, more so, perhaps, than another woman in the same position would have done, for Marian was eminently frank and fearless, especially where conscience was concerned.

And Thurston met her arguments with a graceful nonchalance, as seemingly polite and good humored, as it was really ironical and insulting.

Marian gave him time—she was patient as firm—and firm as sorrowful. And not until every argument and persuasion had failed, she said—

"As a last resort, it may be necessary for me to warn Miss Le Roy—not for my own sake. Were I alone involved, you know how much I would endure rather than grieve you. But this young lady must not suffer wrong."

"You will write her an anonymous letter, possibly?"

"No—I never take an indirect road to an object."

"What then can you do, fair saint?"

"See Miss Le Roy, personally."

"Ha, ha, ha! What apology could you possibly make for such an unwarrantable interference?"

"The Lord knoweth! *I* do not now. But I trust to be able to save her without——revealing you."

"Do you imagine that vague warnings would have any effect upon her?"

"Coming from *me* they would."

"Heavens! What a self-worshiper! But selfishness is your normal state, Marian! Self-love is your only affection—self-adulation your only enthusiasm—self-worship your only religion! You do not desire to be loved—you wish only to be honored! The love I offered you, you trampled under foot! You have no heart, you have only a brain! You cannot love, you can only think! Nor have you any need of love, but only of power! Applause is your vital breath, your native air! To hear your name and praise on every tongue—*that* is your highest ambition! Such a woman should be a gorgon of ugliness that men might not waste their hearts' wealth upon her!" exclaimed Thurston bitterly, gazing with murky eyes, that mouldered with suppressed passion, upon the beautiful girl before him.

Marian was standing with her eyes fixed abstractedly upon a distant sail. Now the tears swelled under the large white eyelids and hung glittering on the level lashes, and her lip quivered and her voice faltered slightly as she answered—

"You see me through a false medium, dear Thurston, but the time will come when you will know me as I am."

"I fancy the time *has* come. It has also come for me to enlighten you a little. And in the first place, fair queen of *minds*, if not of hearts, let me assure you that there is a limit even to *your* almost universal influence. And that limit may be found in Miss Le Roy. You, who know the power of thought only, cannot weigh nor measure the power of love. Upon Miss Le Roy your warnings would have no effect whatever. I tell you that in the face of them, (were I so disposed,) I might lead that girl to the altar to-morrow."

Marian was silent, not deeming an answer called for.

"And now I ask you how you could prevent it?"

"I shall not be required to prevent such an act, Thurston, as such a one never can take place. You speak so only to try your Marian's faith or temper—both are proof against jests, I think. Hitherto you have trifled with the young lady's affections from mere ennui and thoughtlessness, I do believe! but, now that some of the evil consequences have been suggested to your mind, you will abandon such perilous pastime. You are going to France soon—that will be a favorable opportunity of breaking off the acquaintance."

"And breaking her heart—who knows. But suppose now that I should prefer to marry her and take her with me?"

"Nay, of course I cannot for an instant suppose such a thing."

"But in spite of all your warnings were such an event about to take place?"

"In such an exigency I should divulge our marriage."

"You would?"

"Assuredly! How can you possibly doubt it? Such an event would abrogate my obligations to silence, and would impose upon me the opposite duty of speaking."

"I judged you would reason so," he said, bitterly.

"But, dear Thurston, of what are you talking. Of the event of your doing an unprincipled act! Impossible, dear Thurston! and forever impossible!"

"And equally impossible, fair saint, that you should divulge our marriage with any chance of proving it. Marian, the minister that married us has sailed as a missionary to Farther India. And I only have the certificate of our marriage. You cannot prove it."

"I shall not need to prove it, Thurston. Now that I have awakened your thoughts, I know that you will not further risk the peace of that confiding girl. Come! take my hand and let us return. We must hasten, too, for there is rain in that cloud."

Thurston—piqued that he could not trouble her more—for under her calm and unruffled face he could not see the bleeding heart—arose sullenly, drew her hand within his arm and led her forth.

And as they went the wind arose, and the storm clouds drove over the sky and lowered and darkened around them.

Marian urged him to walk fast upon the account of the approaching tempest, and the anxiety the family at the cottage would feel upon her account.

They hurried onward, but just as they reached the neighborhood of Old Fields a terrible storm of hail and snow burst upon the earth.

It was as much as they could do to make any progress for ward, or even to keep themselves upon their feet. While struggling and plunging blindly through the storm, amid the rushing of the wind and the rattling of the hail, and the crack ling and creaking of the dry trees in the forest, and the rush of waters, and all the din of the tempest, Marian's ear caught the sound of a child wailing and sobbing. A pang shot through her heart. She listened breathlessly—and then in the pauses of the storm she heard a child crying—"Marian, Marian. Oh! where are you, Marian?"

It was Miriam's voice! It was Miriam wandering in night and storm in search of her beloved nurse.

Marian dropped Thurston's arm and plunged blindly forward through the snow, in the direction of the voice, crying—"Here I am my darling, my treasure—here I am. What brought my baby out this bitter night?" she asked, as she found the child half perishing with cold and wet, and caught and strained her to her bosom.

"Oh, the hail and snow came down so fast, and the wind shook the house so hard, and I could not sleep in the warm bed while you were out in the storm. So I stole softly down to find you. Don't go again, Marian. I love you so—oh! I love you so!"

At this moment the child caught sight of Thurston standing with his face half muffled in his cloak. A figure to be strangely recognized under similar circumstances in after years. Then she did not know him; but inquired—

"Who is that, Marian?"

"A friend, dear, who came home with me. Good night, sir."

And so dismissing Thurston he walked rapidly away. She hurried with Miriam into the house.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ONE OF SANS SOUCI'S TRICKS.

> "Of all surprising, strange, affecting things
> That sorrow meets with in a world of sorrow,
> The strangest sure those smiles of merriment,
> Those sudden bursts of irrepressible glee,
> That like the fountain of some inner gladness
> Spring in the heart of childhood mid its grief,
> And turn its tears to laughter."

SANS SOUCI stood before the parlor mirror, gazing into it, seeing—not the reflected image of her own elfish figure, or pretty, witching face, with its round, polished forehead, its mocking eyes, its sunny, dancing curls, its piquant little nose, or petulant little lips—but contemplating, as through a magic glass, far down the vista of her childhood—childhood scarcely past, yet in its strong contrast to the present, seeming so distant, dim, and unreal, that her reminiscence of its days resembled more a vague dream of a pre-existence, than a rational recollection of a part of her actual life on earth. Poor Jacko was wondering "If I be I?"

Grim' sat in a leathern chair, at the farthest extremity of the room, occupied with holding a book and reading Jacquelina. Suddenly he broke into her brown study by exclaiming,

"I should like to know what you are doing, and how long you intend to remain standing before that glass."

"Oh! indeed! *should you?*" mocked Jacko, startled out of her reverie, yet instantly remembering to be provoking.

"What were you doing, and—"

"Looking at myself in the glass, to be sure."

"Don't cut off my question, if you please. I was going on to inquire of what you were thinking so profoundly. And Madam, or Miss—"

"*Madam*, if you please! the dear knows, I paid heavy enough for my new dignity, and don't intend to abate one degree of it. So if you call me Miss again, I'll get some one who loves me to call *you* 'out!' Besides, I'd have you to know! I'm very *proud* of it. Aint you, too? Say, Grim'! Aint you a proud and happy man to be married?" asked Jacko, tauntingly.

"You jibe! You do so with a purpose. But it shall not avail you. I demand to know the subject of your thoughts as you stood before that mirror."

Now none but a half mad man like Grim' would have gravely made such a demand, or exposed himself to such a rebuff as it deserved. Jacko looked at him quizzically.

"*Hem!*" she answered, demurely. "I'm sure I'm so awe-stricken, your worship, that I can scarcely find the use of my tongue to obey your reverence. I hope your excellency wont be offended with me. But I was wondering in general, whether the Lord really *did* make *all* the people upon earth, and in particular, whether He made *you*, and if so, for what inscrutable reason He did it."

"You are an impertinent minion. But, by the saints, I will have an answer to my question, and know what you were thinking of while gazing in that mirror."

"Sorry the first explanation didn't please your eminence. But now, 'honor bright!' I'll tell you truly what I was thinking of. I was thinking—thinking how *excessively* pretty I am. Now, tell the truth, and shame the *old gentleman*. Did you *ever*, in *all* your life, see such a beautiful, bewitching, tantalizing, ensnaring face as mine is?"

"I think I never saw such a fool!"

"Really? Then your holiness never looked at yourself in a mirror! never beheld 'your natural face in a glass!' never saw 'what manner of man' you are."

"By St. Peter! I will not be insulted, and dishonored, and defied in this outrageous manner. I swear I will have your thoughts, if I have to pluck them from your heart."

"Whe-ew! Well, if I didn't always think thought was free, may I never be an interesting young widow, and captivate Thurston Willcoxen."

"You impudent, audacious, abandoned—

"Ching a ring a ring chum choo!
And a hio ring tum larky!"

sang the elf, dancing about, seizing the bellows and flourishing it over her head like a tambourine, as she danced.

"Be still, you termagant. Be still, you lunatic, or I'll have you put in a straight jacket!" cried the exasperated Professor.

"Poor fellow!" said Jacko, dropping the bellows and sidling up to him in a wheedling, mock sympathetic manner "P-o-o-r f-e-l-l-o-w! don't get excited and go into the high-strikes. *You* can't help it if you're ugly and repulsive as Time in the Primer, any more than Thurston Willcoxen can help being handsome and attractive as Magnus Apollo."

"It was of HIM, then, you were thinking, minion. I knew it. I knew it!" exclaimed the professor, starting up, throwing down his book, and pacing the floor.

"Bear it like a man!" said Jacko, with solemnity.

"You admit it, then. You—you—you—"

"'Unprincipled female.' There! I have helped you to the words. And now, if you *will* be melo-dramatic, you should grip up your hair with both hands, and stride up and down the floor and vociferate, 'Confusion! distraction! perdition!' or any other awful words you can think of. *That's* the way they do it in the plays."

"Madam, your impertinence is growing beyond sufferance. I cannot endure it."

"That's a mighty great pity, now, for you can't *cure it.*"

"St. Mary! I will bear this no longer."

"Then I'm afraid you'll have to emigrate!"

"I'll commit suicide."

"That's you! *Do!* I should like very well to wear bombazine this cold weather. Please do it at *once*, too, if you're going to, for I should rather be out of deep mourning by midsummer!"

"By Heaven, I will *pay* you for this."

"Any time at your convenience, Doctor Grimshaw! And I shall be ready to give you a *receipt in full* upon the spot!" said the elf, rising. "Anything else in my line this morning, Doctor Grimshaw? Give me a call when you come my way! I shall be much obliged for your patronage," she continued, curtseying and dancing off towards the door. "By the way, my dear sir, there is a lecture to be delivered this evening, by our gifted young fellow-citizen, Mr. Thurston Willcoxen. Going to hear him? I *am!* Good-day!" she said, and kissed her hand and vanished.

Grim' was going crazy! Everybody said it, and what everybody says, has ever been universally received as indisputable testimony. Many people, indeed, averred that Grim' never *had* been quite right—that he always had been queer, and that since his mad marriage with that flighty bit of a child, Jacquelina, he had been queerer than ever.

He would have been glad to prevent Jacquelina from going to the lecture upon the evening in question; but there was no reasonable excuse for doing so. Everybody went to the lectures, which were very popular. Mrs. Waugh made a point of being punctually present at every one. And she took charge of Jacquelina, whenever the whim of the latter induced her to go, which was as often as she secretly wished to "annoy Grim'." And, in fact, "to plague the Ogre" was her only motive in being present, for, truth to tell, the elf cared very little either for the lecturer or his subjects, and usually spent the whole evening in yawning behind her pocket handkerchief. Upon *this* evening, however, the lecture fixed even the flighty fancy of Jacquelina, as she sat upon the front seat between Mrs. Waugh and Doctor Grimshaw. The subject of the discourse was. "The Progress of Civilization." Thurston was in one of his most inspired moods, and his lecture was a glorious panorama of history—a succession of glowing pictures, each presenting, in living form and color, some marked page in the book of the world—some distinct stage in the progress of society. Under his masterly hand, you saw the tents and herds of the patriarchs, the rude architecture and the ruder manners that succeeded; next Egypt, in her haughty days; Greece in her glory and in her degradation; Rome in her rise and progress, and decline and fall; the feudal times; the Crusades; the Reformation; the settlement of the New World; and through all these ran that fine, discriminating philosophy that lent the greatest charm to his discourse. He showed how the radicalism of one age became the conservatism of the succeeding one; how the martyred of *one* century became the canonized of the next. He said that there were many good conservative Christians in this age, who, had they lived in the days of Christ, would, from their temperament and disposition, have been very conservative *Jews*, and been among the first to cry "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

Jacquelina was magnetised, and scarcely took her eyes from the speaker during the whole discourse. Mrs. Waugh was also too much interested to notice her companions. Grim' was agonized. The result of the whole of which was—that after they all got home, Doctor Grimshaw—to use a common but graphic phrase—"put his foot down" upon the resolution to prevent Jacquelina's future attendance at the lectures. Whether he would have succeeded in keeping her away is very doubtful, had not a remarkably inclement season of weather set in, and lasted a fortnight, leaving the roads nearly impassable for two other weeks. And just as traveling was getting to be possible, Thurston Willcoxen was called to Baltimore, on his grandfather's business, and was absent a fortnight. So, altogether, six weeks had passed without Jacquelina's finding an opportunity to defy Doctor Grimshaw, by attending the lectures against his consent.

At the end of that time, on Sunday morning, it was announced in the church that Mr. Willcoxen having returned to the county, would resume his lectures on the Wednesday evening following. Doctor Grimshaw looked at Jacquelina, to note how she would receive this news. Poor Jacko had been under Marian's good influences for the week previous, and was, in her fitful and uncertain way, "trying to be good." "As an experiment to please you, Marian," she said, "and to see how it will answer." Poor elf! So she called up no false, provoking smile of joy, to drive Grim' frantic, but heard the news of Thurston's arrival with the outward calmness that was perfectly true to the perfect inward indifference.

"She has grown *guarded*—that is a very bad sign—I shall watch her the closer," muttered Grim' behind his closed teeth. And when the Professor went home that day, his keen, pallid face was frightful to look upon. And many were the comments made by the dispersing congregation.

"I fell in long o' Doctor Grimsay, to-day at church, Miss Edif—and 'clare to Marster, he look so sharp and wild I was right 'fraid o' him," said Jenny, that day, as she put dinner on the table.

"*Did* you see Professor Grimshaw? What *can* be the matter with that man?" inquired Miss Thornton, of her brother.

"An ill balanced mind," answered the Colonel, oracularly. "No man with a head shaped like his, can be perfectly sane."

"Miss Jackeelar, honey, I doesn't want to give no 'fence to nobody, specially *you;* but you take my 'vice and don't 'voke de 'fessor! Caze, child, I cotch my eye on him as he come in —an' ef ever I seed a man 'sessed o' Sam, 'tis he, now mine I tell you," said Old Oliver, putting his head into Jacquelina's sanctum, and whispering mysteriously.

"My good soul, suppose you mind your turkeys and geese, and leave family affairs of importance to the proper authorities," replied Jacquelina, impatiently.

The crest-fallen old creature bowed humbly and withdrew, shutting the door carefully behind him. But scarcely had the sound of his slow footsteps died away, when the door opened again, and Mrs. Waugh entered. She sat down by Jacquelina, and asked,

"My dear child, did you notice the Professor? What *can* ail him?"

"My dear aunty, I'm not a thermometer, to record the changes of weather in Doctor Grimshaw's heavenly face!" said Jacquelina, petulently.

"But, my dear child, the man looks as if the Old Nick were in him, sure enough!"

"Well, I know he does! Looks just like the incarnated old gentleman! But *I* can't help it! What can *I* do? 'Impossibilities are not duties.' I promised to worry him to death in a year! Well, I did my best! Yet here he is still! I vow, how tenacious of life all venomous creatures are! Now, that man's demise has been due these two months, and the debt aint paid yet! Never mind—it is only accumulating interest! that's all!"

"Lapwing, don't talk so! It is very wicked, child! Not that I think you mean it, of course, but then you shouldn't say it! And as for that wretched man, I am truly afraid he will do something desperate!"

"I just wish he'd make haste and do it, then. What do you think it will be when it's *done*, aunty? Will he set the Chesapeake on fire, and run away by the light of it?"

"Don't trifle, dear Lapwing, but be circumspect, be cautious!"

From that Sunday to the following Wednesday, not one word was spoken of Thurston Willcoxen or his lecture. But on Wednesday morning, Dr. Grimshaw entered the parlor, where Jacquelina lingered alone, gazing out of the window, and going up to her side, astonished her beyond measure by speaking in a calm, kind tone, and saying,

"Jacquelina, you have been too much confined to the house lately. You are languid. You must go out more. Mr. Willcoxen lectures this evening. Perhaps you would like to hear him. If so, I withdraw my former prohibition, which was perhaps, too harsh, and I beg you will follow your own inclinations, if they lead you to go."

"You should have seen Jacko's eyes and eye-brows! the former were dilated to their utmost capacity, while the latter were elevated to their highest altitude. The professor's eyebrows were knotted together, and his eyes sought the ground, as he continued,

"I myself have an engagement at Leonardtown this afternoon, which will detain me all night, and therefore shall not be able to escort you; but Mrs. Waugh, who is going, will doubtless take you under her charge. Would you like to go?"

"I had already *intended* to go," replied Jacquelina, without relaxing a muscle of her face.

The Professor nodded and left the room.

Soon after, Jacquelina sought her aunty, whom she found in the pantry, mixing mince-meat.

"I say, aunty—"

"Well, Lapwing?"

"When Satan turns saint, suspicion is safe, is it not?"

"What do you mean, Lapwing?"

"Why, just now the Professor came to me, politely apologized for his late rudeness, and proposed that I should go with you to hear Mr. Willcoxen's lecture, while *he*, the Professor, goes to Leonardtown, to fulfill an engagement. I say, aunty, I sniff a plot, don't you?"

"I don't know what to make of it, Lapwing. Are you going?"

"Of course I am; I always intended to."

No more was said at the time.

Immediately after dinner, Dr. Grimshaw ordered his horse, and saying that he was going to Leonardtown and should not be back till the next day, set forth.

And after an early tea, Mrs. Waugh and Jacquelina set out in the family sleigh. A swift run over the hard, frozen snow, brought them to Old Fields, where they stopped a moment to pick up Marian, and then shooting forward at the same rate of speed, they reached the lecture-room in full time.

It was quite crowded, but through the politeness of one of the professors, the three ladies were conducted up the length of the room, and seated upon the front bench that had been reserved for the clergy—some of the latter giving way to accommodate them. The young lecturer was just about to commence his discourse. I will not weary you by any report of it—but merely remark that as usual, he completely magnetized the superior portion of his audience, and that at all the final passages of his oratory, his eyes were irresistibly fascinated to the bench where sat Mrs. Waugh, Marian, and Jacquelina. As for the latter, she was perhaps the very least enchanted of all his hearers—she was in fact an exception, and found the discourse so entirely uninteresting that it was with difficulty she could refrain from yawning in the face of the orator. Mrs. Waugh also, perhaps, was but half mesmerized, for her eyes would cautiously wander from the lecturer's pulpit, to the side window on her right hand. At length she stooped and whispered to Jacquelina,

"Child, be cautious; Dr. Grimshaw is on the ground—I have seen his face rise up to that lower pane of glass at the corner of that window, several times. He must be crouched down on the outside."

Jacquelina gave a little start of surprise—her face underwent many phases of expression; she glanced furtively at the indicated window, and there she saw a pale, wild face gleam for an instant against the glass, and then drop. She nodded her head quickly—muttering,

"Oh! I'll pay him!"

"Don't, child! don't do anything imprudent, for gracious sake! That man is crazy—any one can see he is!"

"Oh, aunty, I'll be *sure* to pay him! He shan't be in my debt much longer. Soft, aunty! Don't look towards the window again! Don't let him perceive that we see him or suspect him—and then, you'll see what you'll see. I have a counter plot."

This last sentence was muttered to herself by Jacquelina, who thereupon straightened herself up—looked the lecturer in the eyes—and gave her undevoted attention to him during the rest of the evening. There was not a more appreciating and admiring hearer in the room, than Jacquelina affected to be

Her face was radiant, her eyes starry, her cheeks flushed, her pretty lips glowing breathlessly apart—her whole form instinct with enthusiasm. Any one might have thought the little creature bewitched. But the fascinating orator need not have flattered himself—had he but known it—Jacquelina neither saw his face nor heard his words; she was seeing pictures of Grim's bitter jealousy, mortification and rage, as he beheld her from his covert; she was rehearsing scenes of what she meant to do to him. And when at last she forgot herself, and clapped her hand enthusiastically, it was not at the glorious peroration of the orator—but at the perfection of her own little plot!"

When the lecturer had finished, and as usual announced the subject and the time of the next lecture, Jacquelina, instead of rising with the mass of the audience, showed a disposition to retain her seat.

"Come, my dear, I am going," said Mrs. Waugh.

"Wait, aunty, I don't like to go in a crowd."

Mrs. Waugh waited while the people pressed towards the outer doors.

"I wonder whether the Professor will wait and join us when we return home?" said Mrs. Waugh.

"We shall see," said Jacquelina. "I wish he may. I believe he will. I am prepared for such an emergency."

In the meantime, Thurston Willcoxen had descended from the platform, and was shaking hands right and left with the few people who had lingered to speak to him. Then he approached Mrs. Waugh's party, bowed, and afterwards shook hands with each member of it, only retaining Marian's hand the fraction of a minute longest, and giving it an earnest pressure in relinquishing it. Then he inquired after the health of the family at Luckenough, commented upon the weather, the state of the crops, etc., and with a valedictory bow withdrew, and followed the retreating crowd.

"I think we can also go now," said Mrs. Waugh.

"Yes," said Jacquelina, rising.

Upon reaching the outside, they found old Oliver, with the sleigh, drawn up to receive them. Jacquelina looked all around, to see if she could discover Thurston Willcoxen on the grounds; and not seeing him anywhere, she persuaded herself that he must have hastened home. But she saw Dr. Grimshaw, recognised him, and at the same time could but notice the strong resemblance in form and manner that he bore to Thurston Willcoxen, when it was too dark to notice the striking difference in complexion and expression. Doctor Grimshaw approached her, keeping his cloak partially lifted to his face, as if to defend it from the wind, but probably to conceal it. Then the evil spirit entered Jacquelina, and tempted her to sidle cautiously up to the Professor, slip her arm through his arm, and whisper,

"Thurston! Come! Jump in the sleigh and go home with us. We shall have such a nice time! Old Grim' has gone to Leonardtown, and wont be home till to-morrow!"

"*Has* he, minion! By St. Judas! you are discoverd now! I have now full evidence of your turpitude. By all the saints! you shall answer for it fearfully," said the Professor, between his clenched teeth, as he closed his arm upon Jacquelina's arm, and dragged her towards the sleigh.

"Ha! ha! ha! Oh! well, I don't care! If I mistook you for Thurston, it is not the first mistake I ever made about you! I mistook you once before for a man!" said Jacko, defiantly.

He thrust her into the sleigh already occupied by Mrs. Waugh and Marian, jumped in after her, and took the seat by her side.

"Why, I thought that you set out for Leonardtown this afternoon, Doctor Grimshaw!" said Mrs. Waugh, coldly.

"You may have jumped to other conclusions equally false and dangerous, madam!"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean, madam, that in conniving at the perfidy of this unprincipled girl, your niece, you imagined that you were safe. It was an error. You are both discovered!" said the Professor, doggedly.

Henrietta was almost enraged.

"Dr. Grimshaw," she said, "nothing but self-respect prevents me from ordering you from this sleigh!"

"I advise you to let self-respect, or *any other motive* you please, *still* restrain you, madam. I remain here as the warden of this pretty creature's person, until she is safely secured."

"You will at least be kind enough to explain to us the causes of your present words and actions, sir!" said Mrs. Waugh, severely.

"Undoubtedly, madam! Having, as I judged, just reasons for doubting the integrity of your niece, and more than suspecting her attachment to Mr. Willcoxen, I was determined to test both. Therefore, instead of going to Leonardtown, to be absent till to-morrow, I came here, posted myself at a favorable point for observation, and took notes. While here, I saw enough to convince me of Jacquelina's *indiscretions*. *Afterwards* leaving the spot with lacerated feelings, I drew near her. *She* mistook me for her lover, thrust her arm through mine, and said 'Dear Thurston, come home with me—'"

"Oh! you shocking old fye-for-shame! I said no such a thing! I said, 'Thurston! Come! Jump in the sleigh and go home with *us*.'"

"It makes little difference, madam! The meaning was the same. I will not be responsible for a *literal* report. You are *discovered*."

"What does that mean? If it means you have discovered that I mistook *you* for Thurston Willcoxen, you ought to 'walk on thrones' the rest of your life! You never got such a compliment before, and never will again!"

"Aye! go on, madam! You and your conniving aunt—"

"Doctor Grimshaw, if you *dare* to say or hint such impertinence to me again, you shall leave your seat much more quickly than you took it," said Mrs. Waugh.

"We shall see madam!" said the Professor, and he lapsed into sullenness for the remainder of the drive.

But, oh! there was one in that sleigh upon whose heart the words of wild Jacko had fallen with cruel weight—Marian!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SANS SOUCI'S LAST FUN.

"A dream is on my soul,
I see a slumberer crowned with flowers and smiling,
As in delighted visions, on the brink
Of a dread chasm."—*Hemans.*

When the sulky sleighing party reached Luckenough, they found Commodore Waugh not only up and waiting, but in the highest state of self-satisfaction, a blessing of which they received their full share of benefit, for the old man, in the overflowing of his joy, had ordered an oyster-supper, which was now all ready to be served smoking hot to the chilled and hungry sleigh-riders.

"I wonder what's out now?" said Jacquelina, as she threw off her wrappings, scattering them heedlessly on the chairs and floor of the hall. "Some awful calamity has overtaken some of Uncle Nick's enemies. Nothing on earth but *that* ever puts him into such a jolly humor. Now we'll see! I wonder if it is a 'crowner's 'quest' case? Wish it was Grim'."

Mrs. Henrietta blessed her stars for the good weather, without inquiring very closely where it came from, as she conducted Marian to a bed-room to lay off her bonnet and mantle.

It was only at the foot of his own table, after ladling out and serving around the stewed oysters "hot and hot," that the Commodore, rubbing his hands, and smiling until his great face was as grotesque as a nutcracker's, announced that Miss Nancy Skamp was turned out of office—yea, discrowned, unsceptred, dethroned, and that Harry Barnwell reigned in her stead! The news had come in that evening's mail! All present breathed more freely—all felt an inexpressible relief in knowing that the post-office would henceforth be above suspicion, and their letters and papers safe from desecration. Only Marian said, "What will become of the poor old creature?"

"By St. Judas Iscariot, that's *her* business."

"No, indeed, I think it is ours; some provision should be made for her, Commodore Waugh."

"I'll recommend her to the trustees of the almshouse, Miss Mayfield."

Marian thought it best not to pursue the subject then, but resolved to embrace the first opportunity of appealing to the Commodore's smothered chivalry in behalf of a woman, old, poor, feeble, and friendless.

During the supper Doctor Grimshaw sat up as stiff and solemn—Jacquelina said—"as if he'd swallowed the poker and couldn't digest it." When they rose from the table, and were about leaving the dining-room, Dr. Grimshaw glided in a funereal manner to the side of the Commodore, and demanded a private interview with him.

"Not to-night, Nace! Not to-night! I know by your looks what it is! It is some new deviltry of Jacquelina's. That can wait! I'm as sleepy as a whole cargo of opium! I would not stop to talk now to Paul Jones, if he was to rise from the dead and visit me!"

And the Professor had to be content with that, for almost immediately the family separated for the night.

Marian, attended by the maid Maria, sought the chamber assigned to herself. When she had changed her tight-fitting day-dress for a wrapper, she dismissed the girl, locked the door behind her, and then drew her chair up before the little fire, and fell into deep thought. Many causes of anxiety pressed heavily upon Marian. That *Thurston had repented his hasty marriage with herself* she had every reason to believe.

She had confidently hoped that her explanation with Thurston would have resulted in good—but, alas! it seemed to have had little effect. His attentions to Miss Le Roy were still unremitted—the young lady's partiality was too evident to all—and people already reported them to be engaged.

And now, as Marian sat by her little wood-fire in her chamber at Luckenough, bitter, sorrowful questions, arose in her mind. *Would* he persist in his present course? No, no, it could not be! This was probably done only to pique herself; but then it was carried too far; it was ruining the peace of a good, confiding girl. And Jacquelina—she had evidently mistaken Dr. Grimshaw for Thurston, and addressed to him words arguing a familiarity very improper, to say the least of it. Could he be trifling with poor Jacquelina too? Jacko's words when believing herself addressing Thurston, certainly denoted some such "foregone conclusion." Marian resolved to see Thurston once more—once more to expostulate with him, if happily it might have some good effect. And having formed this resolution, she knelt and offered up her evening prayers, and retired to bed.

The next day being Holy Thursday, there was, by order of the trustees, a holiday at Miss Mayfield's school. And so Marian arose with the prospect of spending the day with Jacquelina. When she descended to the breakfast-room, what was her surprise to find Thurston Willcoxen, at that early hour, the sole occupant of the room. He wore a green shooting jacket, belted around his waist. He stood upon the hearth, with his back to the fire, his gun leaned against the corner of the mantle-piece, and his game-bag dropped at his feet. Marian's heart bounded, and her cheek and eye kindled when she saw him, and, for the instant, all her doubts vanished—she could not believe that guilt lurked behind a countenance so frank, noble and calm as his. He stepped forward to meet her, extending his hand. She placed her own in it, saying,

"I am very glad to see you this morning, dear Thurston, for I have something to say to you which I hope you will take kindly from your Marian, who has no dearer interest in the world than your welfare."

"Marian, if it is anything relating to our old subject of dispute—Miss Le Roy—let me warn you that I will hear nothing about it."

"Thurston, the *subjects* of a neighborhood's gossip are always the very last to hear it! You do not, perhaps, know that it is commonly reported that you and Miss Le Roy are engaged to be married!"

"And you give a ready ear and ready belief to such injurious slanders!"

"No! Heaven knows that I do not! I will not say that my heart has not been tortured—fully as much as *your own* would have been, dear Thurston, had the case been reversed, and had *I* stooped to receive from another such attentions as you have bestowed upon Miss Le Roy. But, upon calm reflection, I fully believe that you could never give that young lady my place in your heart, that having known and loved me—"

Marian paused, but the soul rose like a day-star behind her beautiful face, lighting serenely under her white eyelids, glowing softly on the parted lips and blooming cheeks.

"Aye! 'having known and loved me!' There again spoke the very enthusiasm of self-worship! But how know you, Marian, that I do not find such regnant superiority wearisome?—that I do not find it refreshing to sit down quietly beside a lower, humbler nature, whose greatest faculty is to love, whose greatest need to *be* loved!"

"How do I know it? By knowing that higher nature of yours, which you now ignore. Yet it is not of myself that I wish to speak, but of *her*. Thurston, you pursue that girl for mere pastime, I am sure—with no ulterior evil purpose, I am certain; yet, Thurston!" she said, involuntarily pressing her hand tightly upon her own bosom, "I know how a woman may love you, and that may be death or madness to Angelica, which is only whim and amusement to you. And, Thurston, you must go no further with this culpable trifling—you must promise me to see her no more!"

"'*Must!*' Upon my soul! you take state upon yourself, fair queen!"

"Thurston, a higher authority than mine speaks by my lips—it is the voice of Right! You will regard it! You will give me that promise!"

"And if I do not—"

"Oh! there is no time to argue with you longer—some one is coming—I must be quick. It is two weeks, Thurston, since I first urged this upon you; I have hesitated already too long, and now I tell you, though my heart bleeds to say it, that unless you promise to see Angelica no more, *I* will see and have an explanation with her to-morrow!"

"You will!"

"You can prevent it, dearest Thurston, by yourself doing what you know to be right."

"And if I do not?"

"I will see Miss Le Roy, to-morrow!"

"By Heaven, then—"

His words were suddenly cut short by the entrance of Mrs. Waugh. In an instant his countenance changed, and taking up his bag of game, he went to meet the smiling good humored woman, saying with a gay laugh,

"Good-morning, Mrs. Waugh! You see I have been shooting in the woods of Luckenough, this morning, and I could not leave the premises without offering this tribute to their honored mistress."

And Thurston gaily laid the trophy at her feet.

"Hebe! will you please to see that a cup of hot coffee is sent up to Mrs. L'Oiseau; she is unwell this morning, as I knew she would be, from her excitement last night; or go with it yourself, Hebe! The presence of the goddess of health at her bedside is surely needed."

Marian left the room, and then Mrs. Waugh, turning to the young gentleman, said,

"Thurston, I am glad to have this opportunity of speaking to you, for I have something very particular to say, which you must hear without taking offence at your old aunty!"

"Humph! I am in for petticoat discipline this morning, beyond a doubt," thought the young man; but he only bowed, and placed a chair for Mrs. Waugh.

"I shall speak very plainly, Thurston."

"Oh! by all means! As plainly as you please. Mrs. Waugh," said Thurston, with an odd grimace; "I am growing accustomed to have ladies speak *very* plainly to me."

"Well! it wont do you any harm, Thurston. And now to the point! I told you before, that you must not show any civility to Jacquelina. And now I repeat it! And I warn you, that if you do, you will cause some frightful misfortune that you will have to repent all the days of your life—if it be not fatal first of all to yourself. I do assure you that old Grimshaw is mad with jealousy. He can no longer be held responsible for his actions. And in short, you must see Jacquelina no more!"

"Whe-ew! a second time this morning! Come! I'm getting up quite the reputation of a lady-killer!" thought the young man. Then with a light laugh, he looked up to Mrs. Waugh, and said,

"My dear madam, do you take me for a man who would willingly disturb the peace or honor of a family?"

"Pshaw! By no means, my dear Thurston. Of course I know it's all the most ridiculous nonsense! But what then? What does Shakspeare say?

"'Jealous souls will not be answered so,
They are not ever jealous for a *cause*,
But jealous for they are *jealous*.'"

"Well! By the patience of Job, I do think—"

Again Thurston's words were suddenly cut short, by the entrance of—*the Commodore*, who planted his cane down with his usual emphatic force and said,

"Oh, sir! *You* here! I am very glad of it! There is a little matter to be discussed between you and me! Old Hen! leave us! vanish! evaporate."

Henrietta was well pleased to do so. And as she closed the door, the Commodore turned to Thurston, and with another emphatic thump of his cane, said,

"Well, sir! a small craft is soon rigged, and a short speech soon made. In two words, how dare you, sir! make love to Jacquelina?"

"My dear uncle—"

"By Neptune, sir; don't 'uncle' me. I ask you how you *dared* to make love to my niece?"

"Sir, you mistake, she made love to *me*."

"You impudent, impertinent, unprincipled jackanape."

"Come," said Thurston to himself, "I have got into a hornet's nest this morning."

"I shall take very good care, sir, to have Major Le Roy informed what sort of a gentleman it is who is paying his addresses to his daughter."

"Miss Le Roy will be likely to form a high opinion of me before the week is out," said Thurston, laughing.

"You—you—you graceless villain, you," cried the Commodore in a rage—"to think that I had such confidence in you, sir; defended you upon all occasions, sir; refused to believe in your villany, sir; refused to close my doors against you, sir. Yes, sir; and should have continued to do so, but for last night's affair."

"Last night's affair! I protest, sir, I do not in the least understand you?"

"Oh! you don't. You don't understand that after the lecture last evening, in leaving the place, Jacquelina thrust her arm through yours—no; I mean through Grim's, mistaking him for you, and said—what she never would have said, had there not been an understanding between you."

Thurston's face was now the picture of astonishment and perplexity. The Commodore seemed to mistake it for a look of consternation and detected guilt, for he continued:

"And now, sir, I suppose you understand what is to follow. Do you see that door? It leads straight into the hall, which leads directly through the front portal out into the lawn, and on to the highway—that is your road, sir. Good morning.'

And the Commodore thumped down his stick and left the room—the image of righteous indignation.

Thurston nodded—smiled slightly, drew his tablets from his pocket, tore a leaf out, took his pencil, laid the paper upon the corner of the mantle-piece, wrote a few lines, folded the note, and concealed it in his hand as the door opened, and admitted Mrs. Waugh, Marian and Jacquelina. There was a telegraphic glance between the elder lady and the young man.

That of Mrs. Waugh said :—

"*Do* have pity on the fools, and go, Thurston."

That of Thurston, said :—

"I am going, Mrs. Waugh, and without laughing, if I can help it."

Then he picked up his shooting cap, bowed to Jacquelina, shook hands with Mrs. Waugh, and pressing Marian's palm, left within it the note that he had written, took up his game bag and gun, and departed.

"The inconceivable idiots!" said Thurston, as he strode on through the park of Luckenough, "to fancy that any one with eyes, heart and brain, could possibly fall in love with the 'Will-o'-the-wisp' Jacquelina, or worse, that giglet, Angelica; when he sees Marian! Marian, whose least sunny tress is dearer to me, than are all the living creatures in the world besides. Marian, for whose possession I am now about to risk everything, even her own esteem. Yet, she will forgive me; I will earn her forgiveness by such devoted love."

He hurried on until he reached an outer gate, through which old Oliver was driving a cart loaded with wood. As if to disencumber himself, he threw his game bag and valuable fowling piece to the old man, saying :—

"There, uncle; there's a present for you," and without waiting to hear his thanks, hurried on, leaping hedges and ditches, until he came to the spot where he had left his horse tied since the morning. Throwing himself into his saddle, he put spurs to his horse, and galloped away towards the village, nor drew rein until he reached a little tavern on the water side. He threw his bridle to an hostler in waiting, and hurrying in, demanded to be shown into a private room. The little parlor was placed at his disposal. Here, for form's sake, he called for the newspaper, cigars, and a bottle of wine, (none of which he discussed however,) dismissed the attendant, and sat waiting.

Presently the avant-courier of mingled fumes of tar, bilge water, tobacco and rum, warned him that his expected visitor was approaching. And an instant after the door was opened, and a short, stout, dark man in a weather-proof jacket, duck trowsers, cow-hide shoes, and tarpaulin hat entered.

"Well, Miles, I've been waiting for you here more than an hour," said Thurston, impatiently.

"Aye, aye, sir—all right. I've been cruising round, reconnoitering the enemy's coast," replied the man, removing the quid of tobacco from his mouth, and reluctantly casting it into the fire.

"You are sure you know the spot?"

"Aye, aye, sir—the beach just below Old Fields farmhouse."

"And south of the Pine Bluff."

"Aye, aye, sir! I know the port—*that* aint the head wind!" said Jack Miles, pushing up the side of his hat, and scratching his head with a look of doubt and hesitation.

"What *is*, then, you blockhead?" asked Thurston, impatiently; "is your hire insufficient?"

"N-n-n—yes—I dunno! You see, Cap'n, if I wer' cock sure, as that 'ere little craft you want carried off wer' *yourn*."

"Hush! don't talk so loud. You're not at sea in a gale, you fool. Well, go on. Speak quickly and speak lower."

"I wer' gwine to say, if so be I wer' sure you wer' the cap'n of her, why then it would be plain sailing, with no fog around, and no breakers ahead."

"Well! *I am*, you fool. She is mine—my wife."

"Well, but, Cap'n," said the speaker, still hesitating, "if so be that's the case, why don't she strike her colors to her rightful owner? Why don't you take command in open daylight, with the drums a beating, and the flags a flying? What must you board her like a pirate in this a way fur? I've been a thinkin' on it, and I think it's dangerous steering along this coast. You see it's all in a fog; I can't make out the land nowhere, and I'm afraid I shall be on the rocks afore I knows it. You see Cap'n, I never wer' in such a thick mist since I first went to sea. No offence to you, Cap'n!"

"Oh, none in the world! No skillful pilot will risk his vessel in a fog. But I have a certain golden telescope of magic powers. It enables you to see clearly through the thickest mist, the darkest night that ever fell. I will give it to you. In other words, I promised you five hundred dollars for this job. Come, accomplish it to-night, and you shall have a thousand. Is the mist lifting?"

"I think it is, Cap'n! I begin to see land."

"Very well! now, is your memory as good as your sight. Do you recollect the plan?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Just let me hear you go over it."

"I'm to bring the vessel round, and lay to about a quarter of a mile o' the coast. At dusk I'm to put off in a skiff and row to Pine Bluff, and lay under its shadow till I hear your signal. Then I'm tc put in to shore and take in the—the—"

"The *cargo.*"

"Aye, aye, sir, the *cargo.*"

Leaving the two conspirators to improve and perfect their plot, we must return to the breakfast parlor at Luckenough. The family were assembled around the table. Doctor Grimshaw's dark, sombre, and lowering looks, enough to have spread a gloom over any circle, effectually banished cheerfulness from the board. Marian had nad no opportunity of reading her note—she had slipped it into her pocket. But as soon as breakfast was over, amid the bustle of rising from the table, Marian withdrew to a window and glanced over the lines.

"My own dearest one, forgive my haste this morning. I regret the necessity of leaving so abruptly. I earnestly implore you to see me once more—upon the beach, near the Pine Bluffs, this evening at dusk. I have something of the utmost importance to say to you."

She hastily crumpled the note, and thrust it into her pocket, just as Jacquelina's quizzical face looked over her shoulder.

"You're going to stay all day with me, Marian?"

"Yes, love—that is, till after dinner. Then I shall have to beg of Mrs. Waugh the use of the carriage to go home."

"Well, then, *I* will ride with you, Marian, and return in the carriage."

All the company, with the exception of Mrs. Waugh, Marian, and Jacquelina, had left the breakfast-room.

Mrs. Waugh was locking her china closet, and when she had done, she took her bunch of keys, and turning to Marian, said,

"Hebe, dear, I want you to go with me and see poor old Cracked Nell. She is staying in one of our quarters. I think she has not long to live, and I want you to talk to her."

"Now?"

"Yes, dear, I am going to carry her some breakfast. So, come along, and get your mantle," said the good woman, passing out through the door.

Marian followed, drawing out her pocket handkerchief to tie over her head; and as she did so, the note, unperceived by her, fluttered out, and fell upon the carpet.

Jacquelina impulsively darted upon it, picked it up, opened, and read it. Had Jacquelina first paused to reflect, she would never have done so. But when did the elf ever stop to think? As she read, her eyes began to twinkle, and her feet to patter up and down, and her head to sway from side to side, as if she could scarcely keep from singing and dancing for glee.

"Well, now, who'd a thought it! Thurston making love to Marian! And keeping the courtship close, too, for fear of the old miser. Lord! but look here! This was not right of me? Am I a pocket edition of Miss Nancy Skamp? Forbid it, Titania, Queen of the Fairies! But I didn't steal it—I found it! And I *must*, oh! I *must* plague Grim' a little with this! Forgive me, Marian, but for the life and soul of me, I can't help keeping this to plague Grim'! You see, I promised to pay him when he charged me with swallowing an assignation, and now if I *don't* pay him, if I don't make him perspire till he faints, my name is not Mrs. Professor Grimshaw! Let's see! What shall I do! Oh! Why, can't I pretend to lose it, just as Marian lost it, and drop it where he'll find it? I have it! Eureka!" soliloquised the dancing elf, as she placed her handkerchief in the bottom of her pocket, and the note on top of it, and passed on to the drawing-room to "bide her time."

That soon came. She found the Professor and the Commodore standing in the middle of the room, in an earnest conversation, which, however, seemed near its close, for as she took her seat, the Commodore said,

"Very well—I'll attend to it, Nace," and clapped his hat upon his head, and went out, while the Professor dropped himself into a chair, and took up a book.

"Oh, stop, I want to speak to you a minute, uncle," cried Jacquelina, starting up and flying after him, and as she flew, pulling out her handkerchief and letting the note drop upon the floor. A swift, sly, backward glance showed her that Grim' had pounced upon it like a panther on its prey.

"What in the d—l's name are you running after me for?' burst forth the old man as Jacko overtook him.

"Why, uncle, I want to know if you'll please to give orders in the stable to have the carriage wheels washed off nicely? They neglect it. And I and Marian want to use it this afternoon."

"Go to the deuce! Is that *my* business?"

Jacquelina laughed, and, quivering through every fibre of her frame with mischief, went back into the drawing-room to see the state of Grim'.

To Jacquelina's surprise she found the note lying upon the same spot where she had dropped it. Doctor Grimshaw was standing with his back towards her, looking out of the window. She could not see the expression of his countenance. She stooped and picked up the note, but had scarcely replaced it in her pocket before Doctor Grimshaw abruptly turned, walked up and stood before her and looked in her face. Jacquelina could scarcely suppress a scream—it was as if a ghost had come before her, so blanched was his color, so ghastly his features. An instant he gazed in her eyes, and then passed out and went up stairs. Jacquelina turned slowly around, looking after him like one magnetized. Then recovering herself, with a deep breath she said,

"Now I ask of all the 'powers that be' generally, what's the meaning of that? He picked up the note and he read it, that's certain! and he dropped it there again to make me believe he had never seen it, that's certain, too! I wonder what he means to do! There'll be fun of some sort, anyway! Stop! here comes Marian from the quarters! I shouldn't wonder if she has missed her note, and hurried back in search of it! Come! I'll take a hint from Grim', and drop it where I found it, and say nothing!"

And so soliloquizing, the fairy glided back into the breakfast-room, let the note fall, and turned away just in time to allow Marian to enter, glance around, and pick up her lost treasure. Then joining Marian, she invited her up stairs to look at some new finery just come from the city.

The forenoon passed heavily at Luckenough. When the dinner hour approached, and the family collected in the dining-room, Doctor Grimshaw was missing; and when a messenger was sent to call him to dinner, an answer was returned that the Professor was unwell, and preferred to keep his room.

Jacquelina was quivering between fun and fear—vague, unaccountable fear, that hung over her like a cloud, darkening her bright frolic spirit with a woful presentiment.

After dinner Marian asked for the carriage, and Mrs. Waugh gave orders that it should be brought round for her use. Jacquelina prepared to accompany Marian home, and in an hour they were ready, and set forth.

"You may tell Grim', if he asks after me, that I am gone home with Marian to Old Fields, and that I am not certain whether I shall return to-night or not," said Jacquelina, as she took leave of Mrs. Waugh.

"My dear Lapwing, if you love your old aunty, come immediately back in the carriage. And, by-the-way, my dear, I wish that you would, either in going or coming, take the post-office, and get the letters and papers," said Mrs. Waugh.

"Let it be in going, then, Mrs. Waugh, for I have not been to the post-office for two days, and there may be something there for us also," said Marian.

"Very well, bright Hebe! as you please, of course," replied good Henrietta.

And so they parted. Did either dream how many suns would rise and set—how many seasons come and go—how many years roll by, before they two should meet again?

The carriage was driven rapidly on to the village, and drawn up at the post-office. Old Oliver jumped down, and went in to make the necessary inquiries. They waited impatiently until he reappeared, bringing one large letter. There was nothing for Luckenough.

The great double letter was for Marian. She took it, and as the carriage was started again, and drawn towards Old Fields, she examined the post-mark and superscription. It was a foreign letter, mailed from London, and superscribed in the handwriting of her oldest living friend, the pastor who had attended her brother in his prison and at the scene of his death.

Marian with tearful eyes and eager hands, broke the seal and read, while Jacquelina watched her. For more than half an hour Jacko watched her, and then impatience overcame discretion in the bosom of the fairy, and she suddenly exclaimed,

"Well, Marian! I do wonder what can ail you? You grow pale, and then you grow red, your bosom heaves, the tears come in your eyes, you clasp your hands tightly together as in prayer—then you smile and raise your eyes as in thanksgiving! Now I do wonder what it all means?"

"It means, dear Jacquelina, that I am the most grateful creature upon the face of the earth, just now; and to-morrow, I will tell you why I am so!" said Marian, with a rosy smile. And well she might be most grateful and most happy, for that letter had brought her assurance of fortune beyond her greatest desires. On reading the news, her very first thought had been of Thurston. *Now* the great objection of the miser to their marriage would be removed—the great obstacle to their immediate union overcome. Thurston would be delivered from temptation; she would be saved anxiety and suspense. "Yes! I will meet him this evening—I cannot keep this blessed news from him a day longer than necessary; for this fortune that has come to me, will all be his own! Oh! how rejoiced I am, to be the means of enriching him; how much good we can both do?"

These were the tumultuous, generous thoughts that sent the flush to Marian's cheeks, the smiles to her lips, and the tears to her eyes—that caused those white fingers to clasp, and those clear eyes to rise to Heaven in thankfulness, as she folded up her treasured letter and placed it in her bosom.

An hour's ride brought them to Old Field Cottage. The sun had not yet set; but the sky was dark with clouds that threatened rain or snow—and therefore Jacquelina only took time to jump out and speak to Edith, shake hands with old Jenny, kiss Miriam, and bid adieu to Marian—and then saying that she believed she would hurry back on her aunty's account, and that she was afraid she would not get to Luckenough before ten o'clock, anyhow, she jumped into the carriage and drove off.

And Marian, guarding her happy secret, entered the cottage to make preparations for keeping her appointment with Thurston.

Meanwhile, at Luckenough, Doctor Grimshaw kept his room until late in the afternoon. Then, descending the stairs, and meeting the maid Maria, who almost shrieked aloud at the ghastly face that confronted her—he asked,

"Where is Mrs. Grimshaw?"

"Lord, sir!" cried the girl, half paralyzed by the sound of his sepulchral voice—"she's done gone home 'long o' Miss Marian."

"When will she be back—do you know?"

"Lord, sir!" cried Maria, shuddering, "I heerd her tell old Mis', how she didn't think she'd be back to-night."

"Ah!" said the unhappy man, in a hollow tone, that seemed to sound from a tomb, as he passed down.

And Maria, glad to escape him, fled up stairs, and never paused until she had found refuge in Mrs. L'Oiseau's room.

One hour after that, Professor Grimshaw, closely enveloped in an ample cloak, left Luckenough, and took the road to the beach.

CHAPTER XXXV.

NIGHT AND STORM.

> "The night is blind with a double dark,
> The rain and hail came down together
> 'Tis good to sit by the fire, and hark
> To the stormy weather."—*Edith May.*

THE heavens were growing very dark, the wind was rising and driving black clouds athwart the sky, the atmosphere was becoming piercingly cold, the snow, that during the middle of the day had thawed, was freezing hard. Yet Marian hurried fearlessly and gayly on, over the rugged and slippery stubble fields that lay between the cottage and the beach. A rapid walk of fifteen minutes brought her down to the water's edge. But it was now quite dark. Nothing could be more deserted, lonely and desolate than the aspect of this place. From her feet the black waters spread outward, till their utmost boundaries were lost among the blacker vapors of the distant horizon. Afar off, a sail, dimly seen or guessed at, glided ghost-like through the shadows. Landward, the boundaries of field and forest, hill and vale, were all blended, fused, in murky obscurity. Heavenward, the lowering sky was darkened by wild, scudding, black clouds, driven by the wind, through which the young moon seemed plunging and hiding as in terror. The tide was coming in, and the waves surged heavily with a deep moan upon the beach. Not a sound was heard, except the dull, monotonous moan of the sea, and the fitful, hollow wail of the wind. The character of the scene was in the last degree wild, dreary, gloomy and fearful. Not so, however, it seemed to Marian, who, filled with happy, generous, and tumultuous thoughts, was scarcely conscious of the gathering darkness and the lowering storm, as she walked up and down upon the beach, listening and waiting. She wondered that Thurston had not been there ready to receive her; but this thought gave her little uneasiness—it was nearly lost—as the storm and darkness also were—in the brightness and gladness of her own loving, generous emotions. There was no room in her heart for doubt or trouble. If the thought of the morning's conversation and of Angelica entered her mind, it was only to be soon dismissed with fair construction and cheerful hope. And then she pictured to herself the surprise, the pleasure of Thurston, when he should hear of the accession of fortune which should set them both free to pursue their inclinations and plans for their own happiness and for the benefit of others. And she sought in her bosom if the *letters* were safe. Yes! there they were; she *felt* them; her happiness had seemed a dream without that proof of its reality. For once she gave way to imagination, and allowed that magician to build castles in the air at will. Thurston and herself must go to England immediately to take possession of the estate—that was certain. Then they must return. But ere that, she would confide to him her *darling project;* one that she had never breathed to any, because to have done so would have been vain; one that she had longingly dreamed of, but never, as now, hoped to realize. And Edith!

she would make Edith so comfortable! Edith should be again surrounded with the elegancies and refinements of life. And Miriam! Miriam should have every advantage of education that wealth could possibly secure for her, either in this country or in Europe. If Edith would spare Miriam, the little girl should go with her to England. But Thurston! above all, Thurston! A heavy drop of rain struck Marian in the face, and, for an instant, woke her from her blissful reverie.

She looked up. Why did not Thurston come? The storm would soon burst forth upon the earth—where was Thurston? Were he by her side there would be nothing formidable in the storm, for he would shelter her with his cloak and umbrella, as they should scud along over the fields to the cottage, and reach the fireside before the rain could overtake them. Where was he? what could detain him at such a time? She peered through the darkness up and down the beach. To her accustomed eye, the features of the landscape were dimly visible. That black form looming like a shadowy giant before her, was the headland of Pine Bluff, with its base washed by the sullen waves. It was the only object that broke the dark, dull monotony of the shore. She listened—the moan of the sea, the wail of the wind, were blended in mournful chorus. It was the only sound that broke the dreary silence of the hour.

Hark! No, there was another sound! Amid the moaning and the wailing of winds and waves, and the groaning of the coming storm, was heard the regular fall of oars, soon followed by the slow, grating sound of a boat pushed up upon the frozen strand. Marian paused and strained her eyes through the darkness in the direction of the sound, but could see nothing save the deeper, denser darkness around Pine Bluff. She turned, and, under cover of the darkness, moved swiftly and silently from the locality. The storm was coming on very fast. The rain was falling and the wind rising and driving it into her face. She pulled her hood closely about her face, and wrapped her shawl tightly about her as she met the blast.

Oh! where was Thurston, and why did he not come? She blamed herself for having ventured out, yet could she have foreseen this? No, for she had confidently trusted in his keeping his appointment. She had never known him to fail before. What could have caused the failure now? Had he kept his tryste they would now have been safely housed at Old Field Cottage. Perhaps Thurston, seeing the clouds, had taken for granted that she would not come, and he had therefore stayed away. Yet no—she could not for an instant entertain that thought. Well she knew that had a storm risen, and raged as never a storm did before, Thurston, upon the bare possibility of her presence there, would keep his appointment. No! something beyond his control had delayed him. And, unless he should now very soon appear, something very serious had happened to him. The storm was increasing in violence; her shawl was already wet; and she resolved to hurry home.

She had just turned to go, when the sound of a man's heavy measured footsteps, approaching from the opposite direction, fell upon her ear. She looked up half in dread, and strained her eyes out into the blackness of the night. It was too dark to see anything but the outline of a man's figure wrapped in a large cloak, coming slowly on towards her; as the man drew near, she recognized the well-known figure, air and gait—she had no doubt of the identity. She hastened to meet him, exclaiming in a low, eager tone,

"Thurston! dear Thurston."

The man paused, folded his cloak about him, drew up and stood perfectly still.

Why did he not answer her? why did he not speak to her? why did he stand so motionless, and look so strange? She could not have seen the expression of his countenance, even if a flap of his cloak had not been folded across his face, but his whole form shook as with an ague fit.

"Thurston, dear Thurston," she exclaimed once more, under her breath, as she pressed towards him.

But he suddenly stretched out his hand to repulse her—gasping, as it were, breathlessly. "Not yet—not yet;" and again his whole frame shook with an inward storm. What could be the reason of his strange behaviour? Oh! some misfortune had happened to him—that was evident. Would it were only of a nature that her own good news might be able to cure. And it might be so. Full of this thought, she was again pressing towards him, when a violent flurry of rain and wind whistled before her and drove into her face, concealing him from her view. When the sudden gust as suddenly passed, she saw that he remained in the same spot, his breast heaving, his whole form shaking. She could bear it no longer. She started forward and put her arms around his neck, and dropped her head upon his bosom, and whispered in suppressed tones,

"Dearest Thurston, what it the matter? Tell me, for I love you more than life."

The man clasped his left arm fiercely around her waist—lifted his right hand, and hissing sharply through his clenched teeth.

"You have drawn on your own doom—die, wretched girl;" plunged a dagger in her bosom, and pushed her from him.

One sudden, piercing shriek, and she dropped at his feet, grasping at the ground, and writhing in agony. Her soul seemed striving to recover the shock, and recollect its faculties. She half arose upon her elbow, supported her head upon her hand, and with her other hand drew the steel out from her bosom, and laid it down. The blood followed, and with the life-stream her strength flowed away. The hand that supported her head suddenly dropped, and she fell back. The man had been standing over her, speechless, motionless, breathless, like some wretched somnambulist, suddenly awakened in the commission of a crime, and gazing in horror, amazement, and unbelief upon the work of his sleep.

Suddenly he dropped upon his knees by her side, put his arm under her head and shoulders and raised her up; but her chin fell forward upon her bosom, and her eyes fixed and glazed. He laid her down gently, groaning in a tone of unspeakable anguish,

"Miss Mayfield! my God! what have I done?" And with an awful cry between a shriek and a groan, the wretched man cast himself upon the ground by the side of the fallen body.

The storm was beating wildly upon the assassin and his victim, but the one felt it no more than the other. At length the sound of footsteps was heard approaching fast and near. In the very anguish of remorse the instinct of self-preservation seized the wretched man, and he started up and fled as from the face of the avenger of blood.

In the meantime Jacquelina had reached home sooner than she had expected. It was just dark, and the rain was beginning to fall as she sprang from the carriage and darted into the house.

Mrs. Waugh met her in the hall, took her hand and said,

"Oh, my dear Lapwing, I'm so glad you have come back, bad as the weather is, for indeed the Professor gives me a great deal of anxiety, and if you had stayed away to-night I could not have been answerable for the consequences. There, now, hurry up stairs and change your dress, and come down to tea. It is all ready, and we have a pair of canvass-back ducks roasted."

"Very well, aunty! But—is Grim' in the house?"

"I don't know, my love. You hurry."

Jacquelina tripped up the stairs to her own room, which she found lighted, warmed, and attended by her maid, Maria. She took off her bonnet and mantle, and laid them aside, and began to smooth her hair, dancing all the time, and quivering with suppressed laughter, in anticipation of her "fun." When she had arranged her dress, she went down stairs and passed into the dining-room, where the supper table was set.

"See if Nace Grimshaw is in his room, and if he is not, we will wait no longer!" said the hungry Commodore, thumping his heavy stick down upon the floor.

Festus sprang to do his bidding, and after an absence of a few minutes returned with the information that the Professor was not there.

Jacquelina shrugged her shoulders, and shook with inward laughter.

They all sat down, and amid the Commodore's growls at Grim's irregular hours, and Jacquelina's shrugs and smiles and sidelong glances and ill-repressed laughter, the meal passed. And when it was over, the Commodore, leaning on Mrs. Waugh's arm, went to his own particular sofa in the back parlor; Mrs. L'Oiseau remained, to superintend the clearing away of the supper-table; and Jacquelina danced on to the front parlor, where she found no one but the maid, who was mending the fire.

"Say! did you see anything of the Professor while I was gone?" she inquired.

"Lors, honey, I wish I hadn't! I knows how de thought of it will give me 'liriums nex' time I has a fever."

"Why? what did he do? when was it?"

"Why, chile, jes afore sundown, as I was a carryin' an armful of wood up stairs, for Miss Mary's room, I meets de 'fessor a-comin' down. I like to a' screamed! I like to a' let de wood drap! I like to a drapped right down myself! It made my heart beat in de back o' my head! he look so awful, horrid gashly. Arter speakin' in a voice hollow as an empty coffin, an' skeering me out'n my seventeen sensibles axin arter you, he jes tuk hisself off summers, an' I aint seen him sence."

"What did he ask you? what did you tell him?"

"He jes ax where you was; I telled him how you wer' gone home long o' Miss Marian; he ax when you were coming back; I telled him I believed not till to-morrow mornin'; then his face turned all sorts of awful dark colors, an' seemed like it crushed right in, an' he nodded and said, '*Ah!*' but it sounded jes like a hollow groan; and he tuk hisself off, and I aint seen him sence."

The elf danced about the room, unable to restrain her glee. And the longer Doctor Grimshaw remained away, the more excited she grew She skipped about like the very sprite of mischief, exclaiming to herself,

"Oh! *shan't* we have fun presently! Oh, shan't we, though! The Grim' maniac! he has gone to detect ME! And he'll break in upon Thurston and Marian's interview. Wont there be an explosion! Oh, Jupiter! Oh, Puck! Oh, Mercury! what fun, what delicious fun! *Wr-r-r-r!* I can scarcely contain myself! Begone, Maria! vanish! I want all the space in this room to myself! Oh, fun alive! What a row there'll be! methinks I hear the din of battle!

> "Oh, clang a rang, a rang, clang, clash!
> Whoop!"

sang the elf, springing and dancing, and spinning, and whirling, around and around the room in the very ecstasy of mischief. Her dance was brought to a sudden and an awful close.

The hall door was thrown violently open, hurried and irregular steps were heard approaching, the parlor door was pushed open, and Doctor Grimshaw staggered forward and paused before her!

Yes! her frolic was brought to an eternal end. She saw at a glance that something fatal, irreparable, had happened. There was *blood* upon his hands and wristbands. Oh, more! far more! there was the unmistakable mark of Cain upon his writhen brow! Before now she had seen him look pale and wild and haggard, and had known neither fear nor pity for him! but *now!* an exhumed corpse galvanized into a horrid semblance of life, might look as he did! with just such sunken cheeks and ashen lips, and frozen eyes! with just such a collapsed and shuddering form! yet, withal, could not have shown that terrific look of utter, incurable despair! His fingers, talon-like in their horny paleness and rigidity, clutched his breast, as if to tear some mortal anguish thence, and his glassy eyes were fixed in unutterable reproach upon her face! Thrice he essayed to speak, but a gurgling noise in his throat was the only result. With a last great effort to articulate, the blood suddenly filled his throat and gushed from his mouth! For a moment he sought to stay the hemorrhage by pressing a handkerchief to his lips, but soon his hand dropped powerless to his side, he reeled and fell upon the floor!

Jacquelina gazed in horror on her work.

And then her screams of terror filled the house!

The family came rushing in. Foremost entered the Commodore, shaking his stick in a towering passion, and exclaiming, at the top of his voice,

"What the d—l is all this? What's broke loose now? What are you raising all this row for, you infernal little Hurricane?"

"Oh, uncle! aunty! mother! look! look!" exclaimed Jacquelina, wringing her pale fingers, and pointing to the fallen man.

The sight arrested all eyes.

The miserable man lay over on his side, ghastly pale, and breathing laboriously, every breath pumping out the life blood that had made a little pool beside his face.

Mrs. Waugh and Mary L'Oiseau hastened to stoop and raise the sufferer. The Commodore drew near, half stupefied, as he always was in a crisis.

"What—what—what's all this? Who did it? how did it happen?" he asked, with a look of dull amazement.

"Give me a sofa cushion, Maria, to place under his head. Mary L'Oiseau, hurry as fast as you can, and send a boy for Doctor Brightwell; tell him to take the swiftest horse in the stable, and ride for life and death, and bring the physician instantly, for Doctor Grimshaw is dying—hurry!

"Dying? eh! what! what did you say, Henrietta?" inquired the Commodore, in a sort of stupid, blind anxiety, for he was unable to comprehend what had happened. "Speak to me, Henrietta! What is the matter? what ails Grim'?"

"He has ruptured an artery," said Mrs. Waugh, gravely, as she laid the sufferer gently back upon the carpet, and placed the sofa pillow under his head.

"Ruptured an artery! How did it happen? Grim'! Nace! speak to me—how do you feel? Oh, Heaven, he doesn't speak! he doesn't hear me! Oh, Henrietta, he is very ill! he is very ill! he must be put to bed at once, and the doctor sent for! Come here, Maria! help me to lift your young master," said the old man, waking up to anxiety.

"Stay! the doctor has been sent for; but *he* must not be moved, it would be fatal to him; indeed, I fear that he is beyond human help," said Henrietta, as she wiped the gushing stream from the lips of the dying man.

"Beyond human help! eh? what? Nace! no, no, no, no, it can't be!" said the old man, kneeling down, and bending over him in helpless trouble.

"Attend Doctor Grimshaw, while I hurry out and see what can be done, Mary," said Mrs. Waugh, resigning her charge, and then hastening from the room. She soon returned, bringing with her such remedies as her limited knowledge suggested. And she and Mary L'Oiseau applied them; but in vain! every effort for his relief seemed but to hasten his death. The hemorrhage was subsiding, so also was his breath. "It is too late, he is dying," said Henrietta, solemnly.

"Dying! no, no, Nace! Nace! speak to me, Nace! you're not dying! I've lost more blood than that in my time! Nace! Nace! speak to your old—speak, Nace!" cried the Commodore, stooping down and raising the sufferer in his arms, and gazing, half-wildly, half-stupidly, at the congealing face.

He continued thus for some moments, until Mrs. Waugh, putting her hand upon his shoulder, said gravely and kindly,

"Lay him down, Commodore Waugh—he is gone."

"Gone! Gone!" echoed the old man, in his imbecile distraction, and dropped his gray head upon the corpse, and groaned aloud.

Mrs. Waugh came and laid her hand affectionately on his shoulder. He looked up in such hopeless, helpless trouble, and cried out,

"Oh, Henrietta, he was my son, my only, *only* son! my poor! unowned boy! Oh, Henrietta, *is* he dead? are you *sure?* is he *quite gone?*"

"He is gone, Commodore Waugh; lay him down; come away to your room," said Henrietta, gently taking his hand.

Jacquelina, white with horror, was kneeling with clasped hands and dilated eyes, gazing on the ruin. The old man's glance fell upon her there, and his passion changed from grief to fury—fiercely he broke forth,

"It was *you! You* are the murderess—*you!* Heaven's vengeance light upon you!"

"Oh, I *never* meant it! I never meant it! I am very wretched. I wish I'd never been born!" cried Jacqueline, wringing her pale fingers.

"Out of my sight, you Curse! Out of my sight! and may Heaven's wrath pursue you!" thundered the Commodore, shaking with grief and rage.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE BODY ON THE BEACH.

> "Between th' enacting of a dreadful deed
> And the first motion all the interim is
> Like the phantasma of a hideous dream."—*Shakspeare.*

In the meanwhile, where was he whose headlong passions had precipitated this catastrophe? where was Thurston? After having parted with his confederate, he hurried home, for a very busy day lay before him. To account for his sudden departure, and long absence, and to cover his retreat, it was necessary to have some excuse, such as a peremptory summons to Baltimore upon the most important business. Once in that city, he would have leisure to find some further apology for proceeding directly to France without first returning home. Now, strange as it may appear, though his purposed treachery to Marian wrung his bosom with remorse whenever he paused to think of it—yet it was a remorse without humiliation; for he persuaded himself that stratagem was fair in love as in war, especially in his case with Marian, who had already given him her hand;

but now the unforeseen necessity of these subterfuges made his cheek burn. He hastened to Dell-Delight, and showing the old man a letter he had that morning received from the city, informed him that he was obliged to depart immediately, upon affairs of the most urgent moment to him, and then, to escape the sharp stings of self-scorn, he busied himself with arranging his papers, packing his trunks and ordering his servants. His baggage was packed into and behind the old family carriage, and having completed his preparations about one o'clock, he entered it, and was driven rapidly to the village.

The schooner was already at the wharf and waiting for him. Thurston met many of his friends in the village, and in an offhand manner explained to them the ostensible cause of his journey. And thus, in open daylight, gayly chatting with his friends, Thurston superintended the embarkation of his baggage. And it was not until after one by one they had shaken hands with him, wished him a good voyage and departed, that Thurston found himself alone with the captain in the cabin.

"Now you know, Miles, that I have not come on board to remain. When the coast is clear I shall go on shore, get in the carriage, and return to Dell-Delight. I *must* meet my wife on the beach. I must remain with her through all. *I* must take her on board. You will be off Pine Bluff just at dusk, captain?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"You will not be a moment behind-hand?"

"Trust me for that, Cap'n."

"See if the people have left."

"The skipper went on deck and returned, to report the coast clear.

Thurston then went on shore, entered the carriage, and was driven homeward.

It was nearly four o'clock when he reached Dell-Delight, and there he found the whole premises in a state of confusion. Several negroes were on the lookout for him; and as soon as they saw him ran to the house.

"What is meaning of all this?" he inquired, detaining one of the hindmost.

"Oh, Marse Thuster, sir! oh, sir!" exclaimed the boy, rolling his eyes quite wildly.

"What is the matter with the fool?"

"Oh, sir! my poor ole marse! my poor ole marse!"

"What has happened to your master? can't you be plain, sir?"

"Oh, Marse Thuster, sir! he done fell down inter a fit, an' had to be toted off to bed."

"A fit! good heavens! has a doctor been summoned?" exclaimed Thurston, springing from his seat.

"Oh, yes, sir! Jase be done gone arter de doctor."

Thurston stopped to inquire no farther, but ran into the house and up into his grandfather's chamber.

There a distressing scene met his eyes. The old man, with his limbs distorted, and his face swollen and discolored, lay in a state of insensibility upon the bed. Two or three negro women were gathered around him, variously occupied with rubbing his hands, chafing his temples, and wiping the oozing foam from his lips. At the foot of the bed stood poor daft Fanny, with disheveled hair and dilated eyes, chanting a grotesque monologue, and keeping time with a see-saw motion from side to side. The first thing Thurston did, was to take the hand of this poor crazed, but docile creature, and lead her from the sick room up into her own. He bade her remain there, and then returned to his grandfather's bedside. In reply to his anxious questioning, he was informed that the old man had fallen into a fit about an hour before—that a boy had been instantly sent for the doctor, and the patient carried to bed; but that he had not spoken since they laid him there. It would yet be an hour before the doctor could possibly arrive, and the state of the patient demanded instant attention.

And withal Thurston was growing very anxious upon Marian's account. The sun was now sinking under a dark bank of clouds. The hour of his appointed meeting with her was approaching. He felt, of course, that his scheme must for the present be deferred—even if its accomplishment should again seem necessary, which was scarcely possible. But Marian would expect him. And how should he prevent her from coming to the beach and waiting for him there? He did not know where a message would be most likely *now* to find her, whether at Luckenough, at Old Fields, or at Colonel Thornton's. But he momentarily expected the arrival of Doctor Brightwell, and he resolved to leave that good man in attendance at the sick bed, while he himself should escape for a few hours, and hurry to the beach to meet and have an explanation with his wife.

But an hour passed, and the doctor did not come. Thurston's eyes wandered anxiously from the distorted face of the dying man before him, to the window that commanded the approach to the house. But no sign of the doctor was to be seen.

The sun was on the very edge of the horizon. The sufferer before him was evidently approaching his end. Marian he knew must be on her way to the beach. And a dreadful storm was rising.

His anxiety reached fever heat.

He could not leave the bedside of his dying relative, yet Marian must not be permitted to wait upon the beach, exposed to the fierceness of the storm, or worse, the rudeness of his own confederates.

He took a sudden resolution, and wondered that he had not done so before. He resolved to summon Marian as his wife to his home.

Full of this thought, he hastened down stairs and ordered Melchizedek to put the horse to the gig and get ready to go an errand. And while the boy was obeying his directions, Thurston penned the following lines to Marian:

"My dear Marian—my dear, generous, long-suffering wife—come to my aid. My grandfather has been suddenly stricken down with apoplexy, and is dying. The physician has not yet arrived, and I cannot leave his bedside. Return with my messenger, to assist me in taking care of the dying man. You, who are the angel of the sick and suffering, will not refuse me your aid. Come, never to leave me more! Our marriage shall be acknowledged to-morrow, *to-night*, *any time*, that you, in your nicer judgment, shall approve. Come! let nothing hinder you. I will send a message to Edith to set her anxiety at rest, or I will send for her to be with you here. Come to me, beloved Marian. Dictate your own conditions if you will—only come."

He had scarcely sealed this note, when the boy, hat in hand, appeared at the door.

"Take this note, sir, jump in the gig and drive as fast as possible to the beach below Pine Bluffs. You will see Miss Mayfield waiting there, give her this note, and then—await her orders. Be quicker than you ever were before," said Thurston, hurrying his messenger off.

Then much relieved of anxiety upon Marian's account, he returned to the sick-room, and renewed his endeavors to relieve the patient.

Ah! he was far past relief now; he was stricken with death. And with Thurston, all thoughts, all feelings, all interests, even those connected with Marian, were soon lost in that awful presence. It was the first time he had ever looked upon death, and now, in the rushing tide of his sinful passions and impetuous will, he was brought face to face with this last, dread, all-conquering power! What if it were *not* in his own person? What if it *were* in the person of an old man, very infirm, and over-ripe for the great reaper? It was DEATH—the final earthly end of every living creature—death, the demolition of the human form, the breaking up of the vital functions, the dissolution between soul and body, the one great event that "happeneth to all;" the doom certain, the hour uncertain; coming in infancy, youth, maturity, as often or oftener than in age. These were the thoughts that filled Thurston's mind as he stood and wiped the clammy dews from the brow of the dying man.

Thurston might have remained much longer, too deeply and painfully absorbed in thought to notice the darkening of the night or the beating of the storm, had not a gust of rain and wind, of unusual violence, shaken the windows.

This recalled Marian to his mind; it was nearly time for her to arrive; he hoped that she was near the house; that she would soon be there; he arose and went to the window to look forth into the night; but the deep darkness prevented his seeing, as the noise of the storm prevented his hearing the approach of any vehicle that might be near. He went back to the bedside; the old man was breathing his life away without a struggle. Thurston called the mulatto housekeeper to take his place, and then went down stairs and out of the hall door, and gazed and listened for the coming of the gig, in vain. He was just about to re-enter the hall and close the door, when the sound of wheels, dashing violently, helter-skelter, and with break-neck speed into the yard, arrested his attention.

"Marian! it is my dear Marian at last; but the fellow need not risk her life to save her from the storm by driving at that rate. My own Marian!" he exclaimed, as he hurried out, expecting to meet her.

Melchizedek alone sprang from the gig, and sank trembling and quaking at his master's feet.

Thurston blindly pushed past him, and peered and felt in the gig. It was empty.

"Where is the lady, sirrah? What ails you? Why don't you answer me?" exclaimed Thurston, anxiously returning to the spot where the boy crouched. But the latter remained speechless, trembling, groaning, and wringing his hands. "Will you speak, idiot? I ask you where is the lady? was she not upon the beach? What has frightened you so? Did the horse run away?" inquired Thurston, hurriedly, in great alarm.

"Oh, sir, marster! I 'spects she's killed!"

"Killed! Oh, my God! she has been thrown from the gig!" cried the young man, in a piercing voice, as he reeled under this blow. In another instant he sprang upon the poor boy, and shaking him furiously, cried in a voice of mingled grief, rage, and anxiety—"Where was she thrown, sir? Where is she? How did it happen? Oh! villain! villain! you shall pay for this with your life! Come and show me the spot! instantly! instantly!"

"Oh, marster, have mercy, sir! 'Twasn't along o' me an' the gig it happened of! She wur 'parted when I got there!"

"Where? Where? Good Heaven, where?" asked Thurston, nearly beside himself.

"On de beach, sir. Jes' as I got down there, I jumped out'n de gig, and walked along, and then I couldn't see my way, an' I turned de bull-eye ob de lantern on de sand afore me, an' oh, marse—"

"Go on! go on!"

"I seen de lady lying like dead, and a man jump up and run away, and when I went nigh, I seen her all welkering in her blood, an' *dis yer* lying by her," and the boy handed a small *poignard* to his master.

It was *Thurston's own weapon*, that he had lost some months previous in the woods of Luckenough. It was a costly and curious specimen of French taste and ingenuity. The handle was of pearl, carved in imitation of the sword-fish, and the blade corresponded to the long pointed beak that gives the fish that name.

Thurston scarcely noticed that it was his dagger, but pushing the boy aside, he ran to the stables, saddled a horse with the swiftness of thought, threw himself into his stirrups, and galloped furiously away towards the beach.

The rain was now falling in torrents, and the wind driving it in fierce gusts against his face. The tempest was at its very height, and it seemed at times impossible to breast the blast—it seemed as though steed and rider must be overblown! Yet he lashed and spurred his horse, and struggled desperately on, thinking with fierce anguish of Marian, his Marian, lying wounded, helpless, alone and dying, exposed to all the fury of the winds and waves upon that tempestuous coast, and dreading with horror, lest, before he should be able to reach her, her helpless form, still living, might be washed off by the advancing waves. Thus he spurred and lashed his horse, and drove him against rain and wind, and through the darkness of the night.

With all his desperate haste, it was two hours before he approached the beach. And as he drew near, the heavy cannonading of the waves upon the shore admonished him that the tide was at its highest point. He pressed rapidly onward, threw himself from his horse, and ran forward to the edge of the bank above the beach. It was only to meet the confirmation of his worst fears. The waters were thundering against the bank upon which he stood. The tide had come in and overswept the whole beach, and now, lashed and driven by the wind, the waves tossed and raved and roared with appalling fury.

Marian was gone, lost, swept away by the waves! that was the thought that wrung from him a cry of fierce agony, piercing through all the discord of the storm, as he ran up and down the shore, hoping nothing, expecting nothing, yet totally unable to tear himself from the fatal spot.

And so he wildly walked and raved, until his garments were drenched through with the rain; until the storm exhausted its fury and subsided; until the changing atmosphere, the still, severe cold, froze all his clothing stiff around him; so he walked, groaning and crying and calling despairingly upon the name of Marian, until the night waned and the morning dawned, and the eastern horizon grew golden, then crimson, then fiery with the coming sun.

The sky was clear, the waters calm, the sands bare and glistening in the early sunbeams; no vestige of the storm or of the bloody outrage of the night remained—all was peace and beauty. In the distance was a single snow-white sail, floating swan-like on the bosom of the blue waters. All around was beauty and peace, yet from the young man's tortured bosom peace had fled, and remorse, vulture-like, had struck its talons deep into his heart. He called himself a murderer, the destroyer of Marian; he said it was his selfishness, his willfulness, his treachery, that had exposed her to this danger, and brought her to this fate! Some outlaw, some waterman, or fugitive negro had robbed and murdered her. Marian usually wore a very valuable watch; probably, also, she had money about her person—enough to have tempted the cupidity of some lawless wretch. He shrunk in horror from pursuing conjecture—it was worse than torture, worse than madness to him. Oh, blindness and frenzy! why had he not thought of these dangers so likely to beset her solitary path? Why had he so recklessly exposed her to them? Vain questions, alas! vain as was his self-reproach, his anguish and despair!

In the meantime, how had the morning broken upon Dell-Delight? how upon Luckenough? and how at Old Field Cottage?

At Dell-Delight, the old man had expired just before the sun arose. The two physicians that had been summoned the night previous, but had been delayed by the storm, arrived in the morning only to see the patient die. Many inquiries were made, and much conjecture formed, as to the cause of Thurston Willcoxen's improper and unaccountable absence at such a juncture. But Melchizedek, poor, faithful fellow, having followed his master's steps, did not appear, and no one else upon the premises could give any explanation relative to the movements of their young master. He had left the bedside of his dying relative at nine o'clock the night before, and he had not since returned—his saddle-horse was gone from the stable—that was all that could be ascertained. Dr. Brightwell took his departure, to answer other pressing calls. But Dr. Weismann, seeing that there was no responsible person in charge, and having elsewhere no urgent demands upon his time and attention, kindly volunteered to stay and superintend affairs at Dell-Delight, until the reappearance of the young master.

At Old Field Cottage, Edith had sat up late the night before waiting for Marian; but seeing that she did not return, had taken it for granted that she had remained all night with Miss Thornton, and so, without the least uneasiness at her prolonged absence, had retired to rest. And in the morning she arose with the same impression on her mind, gayly looking forward to Marian's return with the visitor, and the certain happy revelation she had promised.

She had breakfast over early, made the room very tidy, dressed Miriam in her holiday clothes, put on her own Sunday gown, and sat down to wait for Marian and the visitor. The morning passed slowly, in momentary expectation of an arrival.

It was near eleven o'clock when she looked up and saw Colonel Thornton's carriage approaching the cottage.

"There! I said so! I knew Marian had remained with Miss Thornton, and that they would bring her home this morning. I suppose Colonel Thornton and his sister are both with her! And now for the revelation! I wonder what it is," said Edith, smiling to herself, as she arose and stroked down her dress, and smoothed her ringlets, preparatory to meeting her guests.

By this time the carriage had drawn up before the cottage gate. Edith went out just in time to see the door opened, and Miss Thornton alight. The lady was alone—that Edith saw at the first glance, and,

"What can be the meaning of this?" she asked herself, as she went forward to welcome her visitor.

But Miss Thornton was very pale and tremulous, and she acted altogether strangely.

"How do you do, Miss Thornton? I am very glad to see you," said Edith, cordially offering her hand.

But the lady seized it, and drew her forcibly towards the door, saying, in a husky voice,

"Come in—come in."

Full of surprise, Edith followed her.

"Sit down," she continued, sinking into a chair, and pointing to a vacant one by her side.

Edith took the seat, and waited in wonder for her fartner speech.

"Where is Marian?" asked Miss Thornton, in an agitated voice.

"Where? Why, I believed her to be at your house!" answered Edith, in surprise and vague fear.

"Good heaven!" exclaimed the lady, growing very pale, and trembling in every limb. Edith started up in alarm.

"Miss Thornton, what do you mean? For mercy sake, tell me, has anything happened?"

"I do not know—I am not sure—I trust not—tell me! when did you see her last? when did she leave home? this morning?"

"No! last evening, about sundown."

"And she has not returned? you have not seen her since?"

"No!"

"Did she tell you where she was going?"

"No!"

"Did she promise to come back? and when?"

"She promised to return before dark! she did not do so! I judged the storm had detained her, and that she was with you, and I felt easy."

"Oh, God!" cried the lady, in a voice of deep distress, and burying her face in her hands.

"Miss Thornton! for Heaven's sake! tell me what has occurred!"

"Oh, Edith!"

"In mercy, explain yourself—Marian! what of Marian?"

"Oh, God, sustain you, Edith! what can I say to you? my own heart is lacerated!"

"Marian! Marian! oh! what has happened to Marian! Oh! where is Marian?"

"I had hoped to find her here after all! else I had not found courage to come!"

"Miss Thornton, this is cruel—"

"Ah! poor Edith! what you require to be told is far more cruel. Oh, Edith! pray Heaven for fortitude?"

"I have fortitude for anything but suspense. Oh, Heaven, Miss Thornton, relieve this suspense, or I shall suffocate!"

"Edith! Edith!" said the lady, going up and putting her arms around the fragile form of the young widow, as to shield and support her. "Oh, Edith! I heard a report this morning —and it may be but a report—I pray Heaven, that it is no more—"

"Oh, go on! what, what was it?"

"That, that last evening on the beach during the storm, Marian Mayfield—" Miss Thornton's voice choked.

"Oh, speak! for mercy speak! What of Marian?"

"That Marian Mayfield had been waylaid, and—"

"*Murdered! oh, God!*" cried Edith, as her overstrained nerves relaxed, and she sunk in the arms of Miss Thornton.

A child's wild, frenzied shriek resounded through the house. It was the voice of Miriam.

At Luckenough that morning, the remains of the unfortunate Doctor Grimshaw were laid out preparatory to burial. Jacquelina, in a bewildered stupor of remorse, wandered vaguely from room to room, seeking rest and finding none. "I have caused a fellow creature's death!" *That* was the envenomed thought that corroded her heart's centre. From her bosom, too, peace had fled. It was near noon when the news of Marian's fate reached Luckenough, and overwhelmed the family with consternation and grief.

But Jacquelina! the effect of the tragic tale on *her* was nearly fatal. *She* understood the catastrophe as no one else could! *She* knew who struck the fatal blow, and when, and why, and under what mistake it was struck! *She* felt that another crime, another death lay heavy on her soul! It was too much! oh! it was too much! no human heart nor brain could sustain the crushing burden, and the poor lost elf fell into convulsions that threatened soon to terminate in death. There was no raving, no talking, in all her frenzy, the fatal secret weighing on her bosom did not *then* transpire.

Before the day was out the whole county was in an uproar

Never had any event of the neighborhood created so high an excitement or so profound a sympathy. Great horror and amazement filled every bosom. A county meeting spontaneously convened, and handbills were printed, large rewards offered, and every means taken to secure the discovery of the criminal. In the deep absorbing sympathy for Marian's fate, the sudden death of Professor Grimshaw, and the reasonably-to-be-expected demise of old Mr. Cloudesley Willcoxen, passed nearly unnoticed, and were soon forgotten. Among the most zealous in the pursuit of the unknown murderer, was Thurston Willcoxen; but the ghastly pallor of his countenance, the wildness of his eyes, and the distraction of his manner, often varied by fits of deep and sullen despair, excited the surprise and conjecture of all who looked upon him.

Days passed and still no light was thrown upon the mystery. About a fortnight after the catastrophe, however, information was brought to the neighborhood that the corpse of a woman, answering to the description of Marian, had been washed ashore some miles down the coast, but had been interred by the fishermen, the day after its discovery. Many gentlemen hurried down to the spot, and farther investigation confirmed the general opinion that the body was that of the martyred girl.

Three weeks after this, Edith lay upon her death-bed; her delicate frame never recovered this last great shock. A few days before her death she called Miriam to her bedside. The child approached; she was sadly altered within the last few weeks; incessant weeping had dimmed her splendid eyes, and paled her brilliant cheeks.

"Sit down upon the bed by me, my daughter," said Edith.

The child climbed up and took the indicated seat. Something of that long smothered fire, which had once braved the fury of the British soldiers, kindled in the dying woman's eyes.

"Miriam, you are nearly nine years old in time, and much older than that in thought and feeling. Miriam, your mother has not many days to live, but in dying, she leaves you a sacred trust to be fulfilled. My child, do you follow and understand me?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Do not weep, tears are vain and idle. There was an injured queen once whose tears were turned to sparks of fire. So I would have yours to turn! You know what Marian has always been to *you*, but, oh! you do not know all that she was to me before you ever lived I should have perished, far from my native land, in poverty and sorrow, but for Marian. She came a stranger to me in my extremity, she watched over, nursed, toiled for me, and when her labor could not procure all the comforts of life, she sold her little girlish ornaments and keepsakes to get them for me. By unremitted care, she raised me at last from a sick bed, and got me into a ship, and brought me across the sea to this my native country. Nor here did her tenderness and care slacken the least. While those from whom nature gave me the right to expect aid and sympathy, withheld both, she, upon whom I had not the slightest claim, beyond the fragile one of common, human sisterhood, stood firmly by us, working for, comforting, supporting me; her girlish head and heart and hands willingly assuming the burden that should have been otherwise borne by manhood and money. *You*, Miriam, must have perished in your infancy but for *her*, for, when Heaven sent you here, I was too deeply prostrated in mind and body to love you, or take care of you the least. But *she* pitied the poor little stranger, and took it to her girlish bosom, and loved and nursed it with all a mother's devotion, and more than a mother's disinterestedness. You grew up in her arms. I sometimes think you loved her more than you love me—well, she deserved it. For oh! she was the most disinterested being that I ever saw. She came among us a young stranger girl, without fortune or position, or any of the usual stepping stones to social consideration. Yet see what influence, what power she soon obtained, and what reforms and improvements she soon effected. The county is rich in the monuments of her young wisdom and angelic goodness. All are indebted to her, but none so deeply as you and I. All are bound to seek out and punish her destroyer, but none so strongly as you and I. Others have pursued the search for the murderer with great zeal for awhile; *we* must make that search the one great object of our lives. Upon us devolve the right and the duty to avenge her death by bringing her destroyer to the scaffold—Miriam, do you hear—do you hear and understand me?"

"Yes, mamma—yes—"

"Child, listen to me! I have a clue to Marian's murderer."

Miriam started, and attended breathlessly.

"My love, it was no poor waterman or fugitive negro, tempted by want or cupidity. It was a gentleman, Miriam."

"A gentleman!"

"Yes, one that she must have become acquainted with during her visit to Washington three years ago. Oh! I remember her unaccountable distress in the months that followed that visit! His name, or his assumed name, was—attend, Miriam! —*Thomas Truman.*"

"Thomas Truman!"

"Yes! and while you live, remember that name, until its owner hangs upon the gallows."

Miriam shuddered, and hid her pale face in her hands.

"Here," said Edith, taking a small packet of letters from under her pillow. "Here, Miriam, is a portion of her correspondence with this man, Thomas Truman—I found it in the secret drawer of her bureau. There are several notes entreating her to give him a meeting—on the beach, at Mossy Dell, and at other points—from the tenor of these notes, I am led to believe that she refused these meetings—and more than that, from the style of *one* in particular I am induced to suppose that she might have been privately married to that man. Why he should have enticed her to that spot to destroy her life, I do not know. But this, at least, I know, that our dearest Marian has been basely assassinated. I see reason to suppose the assassin to have been her lover, or her husband, and that his real or assumed name was Thomas Truman. These facts, and this little packet of notes and letters, are all that I have to offer as testimony. But by following a slight clue, we are sometimes led to great discoveries."

"Why didn't you show them to the gentlemen, dear mamma? they might have found out something by them."

"I showed them to Thurston Willcoxen, who has been so energetic in the pursuit of the unknown murderer; but Thurston became so violently agitated, that I thought he must have fallen. And he wished very much to retain those letters, but I would not permit them to be carried out of my sight. When he became calmer, however, he assured me that there could be no possible connection between the writer of these notes and the murderer of the unfortunate girl. I, however, think differently—I think there is a connection, and even an identity; and I think this packet may be the means of bringing the criminal to justice; and I leave it—a sacred trust—in your charge, Miriam. Guard it well! guard it as your only treasure, until it has served its destined purpose. And now, Miriam, do you know the nature of a vow?"

"Yes, mamma?"

"Do you understand its solemnity? its obligation? its inviolability?"

"I think I do, mamma."

"Do you know that in the performance of your vow, if necessary, no toil, no privation, no suffering of mind or body, no dearest interest of your life, no strongest affection of your soul, but must be sacrificed—do you comprehend all this?"

"Yes, mamma, I knew it before—and I have read of Jepthah and his daughter."

"Now, Miriam, kneel down, fold your hands, and give them to me between my own—look into my eyes. I want you to make a vow to God and to your dying mother, to avenge the death of Marian. Will you bind your soul by such an obligation?"

The child was magnetized by the thrilling eyes that gazed deep into her own—she answered, "Yes, mamma."

"You vow in the sight of God and all his holy angels, that as you hope for salvation, you will devote your life with all your faculties of mind and body, to the discovery and punishment of Marian's murderer; and also that you will live a maiden until you become an avenger."

"I vow."

Swear that no afterthought shall tempt you to falter—that happen what may in the changing years, you will not hesitate—that though your interests and affections should intervene, you will not suffer them to retard you in your purpose; that no effort, no sacrifice, no privation, no suffering of mind or body shall be spared, if needful, to the accomplishment of your vow."

"I swear."

"You will do it! You are certain to discover the murderer, and clear up the mystery."

The mental excitement that had carried Edith through this scene subsided, and left her very weak, so that when Thurston Willcoxen soon after called to see her, she was unable to receive him.

The next morning, however, Thurston repeated his visit, and was brought to the bedside of the invalid.

Thurston was frightfully changed, the sufferings of the last month seemed to have made him old—his countenance was worn, his voice hollow, and his manner abstracted and uncertain.

"Edith," he asked, as he took the chair near her head, "do you feel stronger this morning?"

"Yes—I always do in the forenoon."

"Do you feel well enough to talk of Miriam and her future?"

"Oh, yes."

"What have you proposed to do with her?"

"I shall leave her to Aunt Henrietta—she will never let the child want."

"But Mrs. Waugh is quite an old lady now. Jacquelina is insane, the Commodore and Mrs. L'Oiseau scarcely competent to take care of themselves—and Luckenough a sad, unpromising home for a little girl."

"I know it—oh! I know it; why do you speak of it, since I can do no otherwise?"

"To point out how you may do otherwise, dear Edith. It would have been cruel to mention it else."

She looked up at him with surprise and inquiry.

"Edith, you have known me from my boyhood. You know what I am. Will you leave your orphan daughter to me? You look at me in wonder; but listen, dear Edith, and then decide. Marian—dear martyred saint! loved that child as her own. And *I* loved Marian—loved her as I had never deemed it possible for heart to love—I cannot speak of this! it deprives me of reason," he said, suddenly covering his eyes with his hands, while a spasm agitated his worn face. In a few minutes he resumed.

"Look at me, Edith! the death of Marian has brought me to what you see! My youth has melted away like a morning mist. I have not an object in life except to carry out purposes which were dear to her benevolent heart, and which her sudden death has left incomplete. I have not an affection in the world except that which comes through her. I should love this child dearly, and cherish her devotedly for Marian's sake. I shall never change my bachelor life—but I should like to legally adopt little Miriam. I should give her the best educational advantages, and make her the co-heir with my young brother Paul Douglas, of all I possess. Say, Edith, can you trust your child to me?" He spoke earnestly, fervently, taking her hand and pressing it, and gazing pleadingly into her eyes.

"So you loved Marian—I even judged so when I saw you labor hardest of all for the apprehension of the criminal. Oh, *many* loved her as much as you! Colonel Thornton, Doctor Weismann, Judge Gordon, Mr. Barnwell, all adored her! Ah! she was worthy of it?"

"No more of that, dear Edith, it will overcome us both; but tell me if you will give me your little girl?"

"Dear Thurston, your proposal is as strange and unusual as it is generous. I thank you most sincerely, but you must give me time to look at it and think of it. You are sincere, you are in earnest, you mean all you say. I see that in your face; but I must reflect and take counsel upon such an important step. Go now, dear Thurston, and return to me at this hour to-morrow morning."

Thurston pressed her hand and departed.

The same day Edith had a visit from Mrs. Waugh, Miss Thornton, and other friends. And after advising with them upon the proposal that had been made her, she decided to leave Miriam in the joint guardianship of Mrs. Waugh and Thurston Willcoxen.

And this decision was made known to Thurston when he called the next morning.

A few days after this Edith passed to the world of spirits. And Thurston took the orphan child to his own heart and home

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MARIAN.

"Will the maiden wake again?
—Her dewy eyes are closed,
And on their lids the texture fine
Scarce shades the dark blue orbs beneath,
And her pale tresses hide
The bosom's stainless pride.
—Yes! she will wake again,
Although her glowing limbs are motionless;
And silent those sweet lips,
Once breathing eloquence."—*Shelley.*

WHEN Marian awoke from the trance-like swoon that had caused the supposition of her death, deep clouds were around, above, beneath, *within* her.

With no power of recollection, with no power of understanding, scarcely conscious of her own identity, scarcely conscious of her existence, she lay helpless as a new-born infant.

Shadows were about her everywhere—shadows on the outward scene—shadows on her mind, and shadows on her heart—yes! heavier than all—upon her *heart*—the impression of some dread loss and sorrow, deep and immutable as the grave, lay burdening her bosom—what was it? she could not tell—nay, she could not even inquire of her memory—so feeble, so uncertain was her vital action.

A square of dim light, or rather of thinner darkness, was over her feet. She did not know or even wonder what it was she *saw;* a monotonous low surging sounded on her ear—she did not know or speculate what it was she *heard;* a gentle rocking motion soothed and lulled her—she did not know, or care to find out what it was she *felt.* Nay, she did not know or seek to know *herself.* Gradually, very gradually came the faculty of thought and recollection; first she dimly remembered the last hour in night and storm upon the beach, when, as she drew the steel from her bosom, the scene had swam around her and disappeared, carrying all consciousness of life away with it.

And now this awakening? Was it in the spiritual or in the material world? if in the latter—were these shadows the shadows of a vault around her? She could not tell! But no! there was the square of dim light over her feet, and it was divided off into oblong divisions—it was a window, an elevated window, and the only view it afforded was that of a cloudy night sky. Where was she?

The monotonous rocking and humming continued—it soothed her senses as the nurse's crade-hymn soothes the infant—and too wearied to feel or think, Marian closed her eyes in slumber, and lost all consciousness until she awoke again.

She woke with a rather clearer recollection of what had occurred before her fall upon the beach, yet with no certain knowledge of what had happened *since.*

It was lighter around her now—the square of light beyond her feet, showed the ruddy glow of the eastern horizon, and below, the opening stairs were dimly to be seen. She turned her eyes around—there were berths each side of the place—there was a bureau and a wash-stand, yet they reeled and rocked as she did.

A very slight noise attracted her attention—she turned her eyes in the direction whence it came, to the right hand corner of her bed's head, and there she vaguely perceived a lady, who stood at a little stand and seemed engaged in pouring something from a vial into a cup. While she watched this lady, the latter turned around, and gently raising the patient's head, put the cup to her lips. Marian drank as a babe might have drank, and then sank back upon the pillow and relapsed into sleep.

And life was blotted out for several hours.

Once more she awoke—it was now high noon. She knew where she was, now; in the neat, well-ordered cabin of a vessel; the square of light beyond her feet was the window in the door at the head of the gangway; she saw through it a portion of the deck and the ropes, and the sea ahead, and the sky beyond. Yes, she was on shipboard; but how did she happen to be there? She strove to recall the past—and then again came memory much clearer and fuller than before, and wrung a deep shuddering groan from her heart; and then a sharp, lacerating pang struck through all her chest, and caught away her breath; she closed her eyes, but at the same time felt a gentle arm slip under her shoulders and raise her up, and a cup placed to her lips. It must have contained some elixir at once anodyne, sedative and nourishing, for as soon as she had swallowed it, indifference and repose came to mind and body. While she lay in that state, another person entered the cabin, and inquired,

"How is your patient, dear Rachel?"

"Her wound troubles her, I think," answered the sweetest voice Marian had ever heard.

"What are you doing there?"

"I am preparing a soothing application for it; and now, as I am about to dress it, you will please to retire, dear."

Soon after this, Marian felt a pair of soft hands uncovering her bosom. She opened her eyes, and saw bending over her, the sweetest face she had ever seen—fair, pale, and gentle, dark gray eyes, and smoothly braided dark-brown hair. Marian strove to speak, but the effort started that acute pain that held her very breath suspended.

"You must not try to speak, dear—do not even try to think; you must consent to be as much like a dormouse as possible," said the gentle lady, while her soft, soothing fingers removed the linen bandages, and bathed and dressed the wound.

Marian's eyes gazed pleadingly in her face.

"You are with friends, dear, who will attend you faithfully until you can be restored to your family. In a day or two you will be able to direct our inquiries. And that you may the sooner be in a condition to do so, you must now be still and patient," said the lady.

Still that eager questioning gaze? Marian would have given the world for the power to ask one question—"Where is Thurston?" But she could not; nay, the fear of committing him, would have held her silent. Her own life assured, she thought only of him, of his safety, his liberty, and his honor.

Strange, clinging, deathless affection; immortal love that all the power of evil cannot kill; divine love that hate, and scorn, and treachery, and cruelty, can never move to anger or revenge—can only move to sorrow and compassion, and renewed hope and effort. It may not be a merit—perhaps nothing so involuntary can be a merit. Yet neither is it a weakness or reproach—no, by its strength to suffer, to labor, to hope, and to redeem—by the sacrifice on Calvary, by all that is best and strongest on earth, and in heaven, it is not a weakness or a reproach! The soul gifted with such power of pure loving, is the medium of the Lord; it is the Father of Love who loveth through it.

In Marian's heart the thought of Thurston caused the profoundest grief and pity, and while she lay there speechless motionless, outwardly calm, her inner life was disturbed by conflicts and struggles to which her nature had hitherto been a stranger.

Those who have ever suffered high nervous fever, aggravated by grief, doubt, or anxiety—and who have lain long days and nights, cut off from conversation with the outer world, know, at such times, how dramatic becomes the inner life—how every separate faculty of the mind, and every individual passion and affection of the heart takes a distinct personality, and what conflicts they have—how many voices speak, and what controversies they hold. So it was with Marian in her illness.

Heart and head—reason and affection, were at war with each other. The heart refused to associate the idea of Thurston with the treachery and violence by which she had suffered.

"It is impossible, utterly impossible, that he could have sunk to such a depth of crime—I do not and cannot believe it," pleaded the heart.

"Unhappily, it is not a matter of belief, but of experience. You know that he was guilty of that crime; your *own senses* were your witnesses," said the head.

"Ah, but there are some cases in which we doubt the evidence of our senses, and this is one. He did not do it."

"Why should you doubt?"

"Oh, his looks, his manner, his tone, his expression, all I know of him, contradicts the possibility of his doing such a thing."

"Yes, but poor heart, see here! did you never yet hear of a fair face and a foul soul? Are hypocrisy, avarice, and cruelty *new* things under the sun? Can you take up a paper without seeing a crime recorded? And are you astonished or doubtful then? Poor heart! crime is surprising only when it appears in our own sphere. Besides, consider this young man's whole conduct towards you. Did he not waylay your path, meeting you whenever he could, following you, walking with you, regardless of the detriment to your good name? Did he not use every art to beguile you into a secret marriage? Did he not finally effect that purpose by appealing to your affection in that sad parting hour, promising that if you would consent to have the ceremonies performed, it should be merely a more binding sort of betrothal, until he was prepared to acknowledge the marriage? Did he keep that promise? Did he not use every argument, persuasion, and threat to induce you to forego fair fame, friends, peace, all in his favor? Upon your steady refusal, did he not wring you by his long estrangement? Was not the whole of his conduct, from the beginning to *this* point, premeditated? Answer!"

"Oh! no, no, I never believed it so. His conduct sprung from impulse, not premeditation."

"Undeceive yourself, poor heart; after having failed in his plan to get you off to France, what happened? Why, he gave you up, and transferred all his attentions to another—a pretty young heiress, in every way very acceptable to his friends."

"It was only done to pique me. It was only a ruse of love!"

"Ah, shrinking heart! Ah, shrinking, cowardly heart! summon all your courage to look on the face of truth! When you interfered, did he not threaten? When you spoke of divulging your marriage, did he not taunt you with your inability to prove it?"

"Oh, but that was only to try my faith and temper!"

"Ah, faint heart! faint, trembling heart! nerve yourself to bear the shock of hard facts. His engagement to Miss Le Roy was generally reported—he never contradicted it. And when he found you resolved to inform Angelica of your marriage, his whole conduct changed—he displayed a conciliatory temper —he pleaded with you to give him a meeting on the beach— a prayer which you, oh, fool and blind, acceded to. And what followed? A meeting—a little human hesitation, and then—"

"Ah, let me not remember it! I cannot realize or believe in it."

"And yet you *know* it! You knew the hand that dealt the blow; you recognized the very instrument with which it was given! the xyphias dagger. Besides, who had an interest in your decease, unless *he* had? You had not an enemy in the world. *He* appointed that rendezvous—you kept it—and met, from his hand, what had nearly been your death. Do you still doubt?"

"Yes, yes, yes—in the face of all that, I doubt."

And so worked up into fever by the conflict of faith with testimony, and love with reason; and suffering, beneath all, an under-current of great sorrow, Marian rolled and tossed upon her bed of mental and physical anguish. Not only once or twice, but over and over again, was this internal controversy held. And all these conflicts retarded her convalescence.

Day followed day, and her strength was not augmented, nor her power of speech recovered. With matchless charity and patience, the lady called "Rachel" attended her bedside. But no explanation ensued between them. Thus several days passed —how many, Marian did not know; when one noon she was awakened from her sleep by the sudden cessation of that rolling motion that had soothed her senses so long a time, and opening her eyes, she saw the gangway glimpses of a thicket of masts, and farther on a crowded pier—and she knew the vessel had anchored in some harbor. While her mournful eyes were fixed in sad inquiry upon the scene, Rachel came with pencil and paper in her hand, and sat down by the bedside, and said, quietly,

We are in New York harbor, dear. This vessel sails for Liverpool in a day or two. My husband and myself go with it; but we will first see you in a place of safety, well attended and provided for, until your friends can reach you. And now, dear, tell me to whom I shall write; here, take this pencil and paper, and set down the name and place of residence."

Marian took the writing materials—paused—closed her eyes, and seemed to be engaged in thought or in prayer, then she scrawled a few words on the paper, and then her hand dropped exhausted.

Rachel took up the scrap, and with some difficulty, deciphered the following words, which she read aloud, to receive further confirmation from the writer:—

"Take me to Liverpool—I have friends and money there—it is my native place."

"Is that what you mean, dear?"

Marian bowed her head. And Rachel took the scrap of paper, and left the cabin. Soon she returned with her husband, who, coming to the bedside, asked,

"You really wish to go to Liverpool, young lady?"

Marian bowed her head.

"You say that you have friends there."

Marian bowed again, and made signs for the pencil and paper—and when they were given her, she managed to scrawl two words,

"*My letters!*"

"Oh, you want the letters that were found with you—here they are," said the lady, as soon as she had read the scrap; going to a beaufet and bringing out the packet.

Marian signed that she should give them to her husband, and that he should read them. The reading occupied perhaps fifteen minutes, and when it was over, he said,

"You shall go to Liverpool with us, young lady; and we will serve you to the best of our ability, until we resign you into the care of your friends."

Marian faintly bowed her thanks.

"And now, Reuben, we must let her rest, or her fever will rise," said Rachel.

The gentleman retired, and the gentle lady administered a cooling sedative to her patient, and sat down by the bed and bathed her head until she fell asleep.

The next morning after breakfast, when Rachel took her place as usual by the side of the invalid, Marian made signs for pencil and paper, and when they were put in her hands, she wrote,

"Please tell me how I came on board of this vessel."

"I fear the subject will excite you too much," said Rachel, when she had read the words.

"Not so much to *hear* as to keep *wondering* about it," wrote Marian the second time.

"In that case I will tell you. It is not much to tell, dear. On the evening of Holy Thursday, about the time the storm arose, our vessel lay to opposite a place on St. Mary's coast, called Pine Bluff, and the mate put off in a boat to land a passenger; as they neared the shore they met *another* boat rowed by two men, who seemed so anxious to escape observation, as to row away as fast as they could without answering *our* boat's salute. Our mate thought very strange of it at the time; but the mysterious boat was swiftly hid in the darkness, and our boat reached the land. The mate and his man had to help to carry the passenger's trunks up to the top of the bluff, and a short distance beyond, where a carriage was kept waiting for him, and after they had parted from him, they returned down the bluff by a shorter though steeper way; and just as they reached the beach, in the momentary lull of the storm, they heard groans. Immediately the men connected those sounds with the strange boat they had seen row away, and they raised the wick in the lantern, and threw its light around, and soon discovered you upon the sands, moaning, though nearly insensible. They naturally concluded that you had been the victim of the men in the boat, who were probably pirates. Their first impulse was to pursue the carriage, and get you placed within it, and taken to some farm-house for assistance; but a moment's reflection convinced them that such a plan was futile, as it was impossible to overtake the carriage. There was also no house near the coast. They thought it likely that you were a stranger to that part of the country. And in the hurry and agitation of the moment, they could devise nothing better than to put you in the boat, and bring you on board this vessel. That is the way you came here," concluded the gentle woman, refraining from expressing any curiosity, or asking any question, lest it might disturb her patient.

The grateful gaze of Marian thanked her, as she held out her hand for the pencil, and wrote,

"Tell me the name of my angel nurse."

"Rachel Holmes," answered the lady, blushing gently. "My husband is a surgeon in the United States army. He is on leave of absence now for the purpose of taking me home to see my father and mother—they live in London. I am of English parentage."

Marian feebly pressed her hand, and then irregularly traced these words,

"You are very good to ask me no questions, and I thank you with all my heart; for, dear lady, I can tell you nothing," and having written them, her hand dropped powerless upon the bed—for she was entirely exhausted by this short conference.

The next day the vessel sailed with the first tide for Liverpool.

Marian slowly improved. Her purposes were not very clear or strong yet—mental and physical suffering and exhaustion had temporarily weakened and obscured her mind. Her one strong impulse was to escape, to get away from the scenes of such painful associations and memories, and to go home, to take refuge in her own native land. The thought of returning to Maryland, to meet the astonishment, the wonder, the conjectures, the inquiries, and perhaps the legal investigation that might lead to the exposure and punishment of Thurston, was insupportable to her heart. No, no! rather let the width of the ocean divide her from all those horrors. Undoubtedly her friends believed her dead—let it *be* so—let her remain as dead to them. She should leave no kindred behind her, to suffer by her loss—should wrong no human being. True, there were Miriam and Edith! But that her heart was exhausted by its one great, all-consuming grief, it must have bled for them! Yet they had already suffered all they could possibly suffer from the supposition of her death—it was now three weeks since they had reason to believe her dead, and doubtless kind Nature had already nursed them into resignation and calmness, that would in time become cheerfulness. If she should go back, there would be the shock, the amazement, the questions, the prosecutions, perhaps the conviction, and the sentence, and the horrors of a state prison for one, the least hair of whose head she could not willingly hurt; and then her own early death, or should she survive, her blighted life. Could these consequences console or benefit Edith or Miriam? No, no, they would augment grief. It was better to leave things as they were—better to remain dead to them—a *dead* sorrow might be forgotten—a *living* one never! For herself, it was better to take fate as she found it—to go home to England, and devote her newly restored life, and her newly acquired fortune, to those benevolent objects that had so lately occupied so large a share of her heart. Some means also should be found—when she should grow stronger, and her poor head should be clearer, so that she should be able to think—to make Edith and Miriam the recipients of all the benefit her wealth could possibly confer upon them. And so in recollecting, meditating, planning, and trying to reason correctly, and to understand her embarrassed position, and her difficult duty, passed the days of her convalescence. As her mind cleared, the thought of Angelica began to give her uneasiness—she could not bear to think of leaving that young lady exposed to the misfortune of becoming Thurston's wife—and her mind toiled with the difficult problem of how to shield Angelica without exposing Thurston.

A few days after this, when Marian had recovered the power of speech, she related to her kind friends all of her personal history that she could impart, without compromising the safety of others: and she required and received from them the promise of their future silence in regard to her fate.

As they approached the shores of England, Marian improved so fast as to be able to go on deck. And though extremely pale and thin, she could no longer be considered an invalid, when, on the thirtieth day out, their ship entered the mouth of the Mersey. Upon their arrival at Liverpool, it had been the intention of Doctor Holmes and his wife to proceed to London; but now they decided to delay a few hours until they should see Marian safe in the house of her friends. The Reverend Theodore Burney was a retired dissenting clergyman, living on his modest patrimony in a country house a few miles out of Liverpool, and now at eighty years enjoying a hale old age. Doctor Holmes took a chaise and carried Marian and Rachel out to the place. The house was nearly overgrown with climbing vines, and the grounds were beautiful with the early spring verdure and flowers. The old man was overjoyed to meet Marian, and he received her with a father's welcome. He thanked her friends for their care and attention, and pressed them to come and stay several days or weeks. But Doctor Holmes and Rachel simply explained that their visit was to their parents in London, which city they were very anxious to reach as soon as possible, and, thanking their host, they took leave of him, of his old wife, and Marian, and departed.

The old minister looked hard at Marian.

"You are pale, my dear. Well, I always heard that our fresh island roses withered in the dry heat of the American climate, and now I know it! But come! we shall soon see a change and what wonders native air and native manners and morning walks will work in the way of restoring bloom."

Marian did not feel bound to reply, and her ill health remained charged to the account of our unlucky atmosphere.

The next morning, the old gentleman took Marian into his library, told her once more how very little surprised, and how very glad he was that instead of writing, she had come in person. He then made her acquainted with certain documents, and informed her that it would be necessary she should go up to London, and advised her to do so just as soon as she should feel herself sufficiently rested. Marian declared herself to be already recovered of fatigue, and anxious to proceed with the business of settlement. Their journey was thereupon fixed for the second day from that time. And upon the appointed morning, Marian, attended by the old clergyman, set out for the mammoth capital, where, in due season, they arrived. A few days were busily occupied amid the lumber of law documents, before Marian felt sufficiently at ease to advise her friends. the Holmeses, of her presence in town. Only a few hours had elapsed, after reading her note and address, before she received a call from Mrs. Holmes and her father, Doctor Coleman, a clergyman of high standing in the Church of England. Friendliness and a beautiful simplicity characterised the manners of both father and daughter. Rachel entreated Marian to return with her and make her father's house her home while in London. She spoke with an affectionate sincerity that Marian could neither doubt nor resist, and when Dr. Coleman cordially seconded his daughter's intention, Marian gratefully accepted the proffered hospitality. And the same day Mr. Burney bade a temporary farewell to his favorite, and departed for Liverpool, and Marian accompanied her friend Rachel Holmes to the house of Dr. Coleman.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

NEW LIFE.

> "Live! for some high and holy work of love,
> And thou an angel's happiness shalt know,
> Shall bless the earth, while in the world above
> The good begun by thee shall onward go
> In many a branching stream, and ever wider flow.—*Carlos Wilcox.*

Marian had many worthy reasons for wishing to cultivate the acquaintance and friendship of Dr. Coleman. The first of which was that she desired to consult him upon the subject of her beneficent purposes, and to have the aid of his greater experience and wisdom to guide her in the application of means to ends. When one morning in his library, Marian presented the subject to the doctor, that reverend gentleman was greatly surprised that a lady so young and beautiful, one without the least bit of fanaticism whatever, should simply resolve to devote her life and wealth to the unfortunate. He could scarcely for-bear from expressing his amazement, and he could not refrain from expostulation. But Marian gravely and gently waived his objections aside, saying,

"Circumstances against which I have no longer the slightest inclination to contend, have cut me off from intimate family relations with others, and have at the same time placed at my disposal a large fortune. I regard these events, perhaps I should say these coincidences, as providential. They interpret to me all my earliest yearnings and aspirations, and point out their destination. From earliest infancy I have felt the profoundest sympathy with *destitute children;* yes, even from the age of three years, when I first noticed the difference between my own cherished and sheltered lot, and the neglected and exposed condition of the little beggar in the street, and wondered why such contrasts should exist, my heart, from its depths, has responded to the suffering looks or cries of the little children. As I grew older, and began to observe, and to reflect upon the many schemes of philanthropy active in the world, and see how one would aim at converting the heathen of the antipodes, another at redeeming criminals, a third at abolishing capital punishment, a fourth at reforming prisons, a fifth at exterminating war, and so on forever;—and when I perceived in all these enterprises, good as they undoubtedly are, how miserably inadequate to the *cost* is the *return*, I could but think of the nearer, and more promising field of benevolence that lay immediately around us, of the little, neglected children of the poor, the ignorant, and the vicious; the little children perishing around our very door-sills, or worse than perishing, growing up to finally become as miserable as their wretched parents. And then it seemed to me that the relief and education of destitute children was a nearer, more urgent, and more hopeful duty, and one that, for labor and capital expended upon it, would yield a greater return in good than any other scheme of beneficence whatever. And I wondered how philanthropists, with necessarily limited means, should devote time and money to the civilizing of savages, and the reforming of criminals, while hundreds of innocent children around them were perishing from want, or growing up in ignorance or vice. Prevention is so much better than cure, that it seems to me bad economy, to spend upon the doubtful event of civilizing a savage, or reforming a burglar, the means that might be devoted to educating and preserving the innocence of a child."

"And yet," said the pastor, mildly, "criminals are also to be pitied, and, if possible, saved. *They* were once innocent children—they are very often the victims of circumstances, rather than subjects of willful depravity—and should have some share in the compassion of your heart."

"And they *have*," said Marian, gravely; "but while my power is limited, and while one little child within my reach remains unfed, unclothed, untaught, I can give the criminal *only* compassion. Shall I 'take the *children's* bread and cast it to the dogs?'"

"That is a severe application of the text to come from a woman's gentle lips."

"I know it is severe, but it is just and appropriate. Children have the greatest claim upon us while they have need, and we have power. Let me proceed with telling you my reasons for thinking so. CHRIST left them a perpetual legacy to us—'Whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me.' *Could* there be a stronger or more affecting recommendation of the children to our mercy? Destitute children, by their innocence, their helplessness, their suffering, and *the bright or dark possibilities latent in their undeveloped natures, and in their unknown futures,* appeal equally to our sympathy and our policy. Again, children are not, as adults are, accountable for their own destitution. They have not, as adults have, a great deal to *un*learn. Their minds and hearts are like fair pages, unwritten with the annals of crime, but ready to receive the impression of good principles. Or they are like the rich open prairie lands of America—no cutting down, rooting up, and clearing to be done—they are all ready for cultivation, and will richly repay the cultivator."

"My dear girl, have you never heard of 'juvenile depravity?'"

"There is no such thing as 'juvenile'—let me separate such words by at least a dozen others—'depravity.' Such a phrase sounds to me false, cruel, and calumnious, or would do so, were it not so contradictory as to be nonsensical. *Children* are never depraved. A child's *habits*, received from his only guides, vicious associates, may be bad enough, but they are bad habits just as his poor little dirty jacket, and his poor little ragged trowsers are bad habits—they are not a part of him, they did not grow out of him, they are external to him, *they were put upon him;* he does not know where to get any better. Only provide him with clean clothes, and show him clean behaviour, and see if he does not prefer them. But to resume the thread of my argument—Lastly, the good commenced in the intellectual and religious culture of children must go on forever, must produce and reproduce good fruits eternally. I do not wish to say one word against other forms of benevolence—they are all good—only this is *best.* It is well, if possible, to reform a criminal, but there, most likely, the good ends. But if you educate a child, you may benefit in after times his children, and his children's children, down countless generations. There is no calculating the good that may flow on forever from one well developed human soul. This view addresses itself to our judicious economy in the application of means to ends, and to secure the greatest return of good from limited power of labor and money. Very early in life I felt this. In my first youth, the Lord entrusted me with but one talent—*leisure*—and I invested it in the teaching of poor children—and it paid a large interest—more than cent. per cent., I assure you, and the interest is still going on, and must forever go on, at compound rate. *Now* the Lord has lent me *two* talents—time and money—and I wish to invest them in the same profitable enterprise."

But we may not pause to trace minutely those labors of love in which Marian sought at once to forget her own existence and to bless that of others.

A few events only it will be necessary to record.

In the very first packet of Baltimore papers received by Dr. Holmes, Marian saw announced the marriage of Angelica Le Roy, to Henry Barnwell. She knew by the date, that it took place within two weeks after she sailed from the shores of America. And her anxiety on that young lady's account was set at rest.

After a visit of two months, Dr. Holmes and his lovely wife prepared to return to the United States. And the little fortune that Marian intended to settle upon Edith and Miriam, was entrusted to the care of the worthy surgeon, to be invested in bank stock for their benefit, as soon as he should reach Baltimore. It was arranged that the donor should remain anonymous, or be known only as a friend of Miriam's father.

In the course of a few months, Marian's institution, "The Children's Home," was commenced. And before the end of the first year, it was completed and filled with inmates. Marian had at first discreetly limited the number to be received to the capacities of accommodation afforded by her house. But could she so limit the expansion of her own benevolent heart? Could she turn back the houseless little ones that wanted to come in? No! never—and it happened, of course, that as month followed month, and her "Children's Home" thrived, and more applications for shelter there pressed upon her, that her house had to be enlarged, and its income increased, and more and more of her reserved private fortune appropriated to meet expenses, until her whole estate was embarked in the benevolent enterprize, and she had nothing left but a home among her own little flock. And Marian did not regret this as long as the income met the outlay.

But the demands of her heart, to be farther useful among the unfortunate, were not satisfied. Her sympathies were awakened, and her thoughts employed for another class of sufferers —the industrious poor of the overpeopled country, starving in enforced idleness. And her mind involuntarily associated with them the vast, uninhabited, fertile tracts of land in western America. She saw these two groups of facts, as surely related to each other as demand and supply, or as disease and remedy. The poor, miserable men and women of the old world, perishing around her for want of food, or the work that would win it—and the broad, rich prairies of the new world lying idle, waiting to repay labor and cultivation with health, competence and independence to the laborer and cultivator—two things morally related, but actually separated. Day and night toiled Marian's heart and brain, with the problem of how to bring these two powers together for mutual advantage. True, she knew that there were colonization companies and emigrant ships, (as she had *also* known when planning for the relief of destitute children, that there were Orphan Asylums,) but they did not seem to meet the case.

It was a doubtful good to pick up a cargo of human beings, as motely as Falstaff's regiment, made up equally of criminals and paupers, and cast them strangers and penniless upon a foreign shore—leaving them to wander about seeking work, begging or stealing, through the Atlantic cities, with not much better opportunities of improvement than they left behind. No; the great uninhabited tracts of the West—the rich prairie lands, the forests with their game, no "lord" or "gentleman" might "preserve," the lakes and streams with their fisheries unincorporated; *this* was the "promised land" for the landless—the hope of the laborer!

Day and night her heart burned and her head planned. Oh for the means of bringing these two related forces together. Had she possessed the fortune of the Baron Rothschild, she would have gladly devoted it to the purpose of settling the industrious suffering poor of over-populated England upon the uninhabited rich territories of the West. She now regarded America as God's beneficent gift to the poor and oppressed of Europe. Oh! for the means of helping these poor to their land of promise. Day and night heart and brain worked with this problem. From herself she could do nothing; her own means were all exhausted upon the children; she had reserved nothing—her very clothing was of that inexpensive material provided for the children's wear.

But Marian knew that the most circumscribed *action* was better than mere fruitless *theorizing*, and she resolved to begin and do something, if it were for the relief of only a few families. Her acquaintance among the benevolent portion of the wealthy and influential was considerable.

Her field of influence was extended and changed. She had now not only to labor for the good of others, but to labor upon the hearts and minds of others. I have before mentioned Marian's irresistible powers of persuasion—that combined eloquence of soul and eye and lip that no one could withstand; that matchless "spell o'er hearts," composed of beauty, genius, goodness, and indomitable will. The idea of a lady, young, beautiful, and gifted, devoting her whole life to purposes so disinterested and benevolent, could not but appeal powerfully to the co-operation of the good, the wise, and the strong around her. She left no means untried to effect the object she had in view, and her efforts were in time rewarded with a fair prospect of success.

But was Marian content? *Did* she realize the promised "angel's" happiness? She lived two lives—the actual life of thought and labor for others, and the inner life of sorrow; patient, silent, veiled sorrow—sorrow that she must bear *alone*. Thus when she suffered herself to relapse into reverie and recollection, her sufferings were almost insupportable; alone, unloved, and filled with the memories of bitter wrongs, how could it be otherwise?

And when, with a strong effort of will, she threw herself with all her force into works of humanity and benevolence, then—was she happy?

But we must leave her for the present, and revisit Thurston.

PART FIFTH.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THURSTON.

"Who by repentance is not satisfied,
Is not of Heaven nor earth."—*Shakspeare.*

After a stormy passage in life comes a long calm, preceding perhaps another storm. I must pass rapidly over several years.

Thurston was a new being. Some Christians will tell you that the new birth is the event of a moment; others, that it is the labor of years. Doubtless both speak truly of their own experiences. In some, regeneration is a slow reform; in others, it is a sudden revolution. With Thurston it was both a violent revolution and a permanent reform. The catastrophe plucked down by his own rash hand upon the head dearest to him in life; the catastrophe that had bereaved him of his idol at the very moment and by the very means he had treacherously taken to secure her; had, as by a thunder-shock, roused him to a sense of what he *was*, what he *did*, and what he was fast *becoming.* His nature was revolutionized. And then ensued the wild anarchy that follows such convulsions, whether of the individual soul, or of the national commonwealth; until it settles down upon a reformed basis. In the confusion that reigned in his bosom, many clamorous voices were heard; there was bitter grief that would not be silent, but wailed forth lamentations forever; there was remorse that never slumbered, but groaned in deep self-reproaches and threats day and night. Hope tried to make her voice heard, and to speak of a nearly impossible fortuity. But despair silenced her by pointing out the facts.

It was after some time, and with much difficulty, that the WILL struggled up through all this anarchy, and gained the ascendency and subdued the storm, and restored quiet and order. And then, though weary and fainting with its toils, the soul saw its way clearly to its course and end.

It was not to sit down supinely and indulge a fruitless sorrow and a remorse as selfish as his sin had been. It was to retrieve the past, to redeem his soul, and to labor for the good of others.

And how many there were to be worked for. He resolved to devote his time, talents and means, first of all to carrying on and perfecting those works of education and reform started by Marian in his own neighborhood.

But this was a very mournful consolation, for in every thought and act of the whole work, the memory of Marian was so intimately woven, that her loss was felt with double keenness. Every effort was doubly difficult; every obstacle was doubly great; every discouragement doubly hopeless, because she was not there with her very presence inspiring hope and energy—and every success was robbed of its joy, because she was not there to rejoice with him. He missed her in all things; he missed her everywhere. Solitude had fallen upon all the earth from which she had passed away. Because her face was gone, all other faces were repulsive to his sight; because her voice was silent, all other voices were discordant to his ear; because her love was impossible, all other friendships and affections were repugnant to his heart; and Thurston, young, handsome, accomplished and wealthy, became a silent and lonely man.

The estate left by old Cloudesley Willcoxen had exceeded even the reports of his hoarded wealth. The whole estate, real and personal, was bequeathed to his eldest grandson, Thurston Willcoxen, upon the sole condition that it should not be divided.

Dell-Delight, with its natural beauties, was a home that wealth could convert into a material paradise. *Once* it had been one of Thurston's happiest dreams to adorn and beautify the matchless spot, and make it worthy of Marian, its intended mistress. *Now* he could not bear to think of those plans of home-beauty and happiness so interwoven with fond thoughts of her. So poignant were the wounds of association, that he could scarcely endure to remain in a neighborhood so filled with reminiscences of her; and he must have fled the scene, and taken refuge from memory in foreign travel, had he suffered from bereavement and sorrow *only;* but he was tortured by remorse, and remorse demands to suffer and to atone for sin. And, therefore, though it spiritually seemed like being bound to a wheel and broken by its every turn, he was true to his resolution to remain in the county and devote his time, wealth, and abilities to the completion of Marian's unfinished works of benevolence.

Dell-Delight remained unaltered. He could not bear to make it beautiful, since Marian could not enjoy its beauty. Only such changes were made as were absolutely necessary in organizing his little household. A distant relative, a middle-aged lady of exemplary piety, but of reduced fortune, was engaged to come and preside at his table, and take charge of Miriam's education, for Miriam was established at Dell-Delight. It is true that Mrs. Waugh would have wished this arrangement otherwise. She would have preferred to have the orphan girl with herself; but Commodore Waugh would not even hear of Miriam's coming to Luckenough with any patience—"For if her mother had married Grim', none of these misfortunes would have happened," he said.

Even Jacquelina had been forced to fly from Luckenough; no one knew whither; some said that she had run away; some knew that she had retired to a convent; some said only to escape the din and turmoil of the world, and find rest to her soul in a few months or years of quiet and silence, and some said she had withdrawn for the purpose of taking the vows and becoming a nun. Mrs. Waugh knew all about it, but she said nothing except to discourage inquiry upon the subject. In the midst of the speculation following Jacquelina's disappearance, Cloudesley Mornington had come home. He staid a day or two at Luckenough, a week at Dell-Delight, and then took himself, with his broken heart, off from the neighborhood, and got ordered upon a distant and active service.

There were also other considerations that rendered it desirable for Miriam to reside at Dell-Delight, rather than at Luckenough, Commodore Waugh would have made a terrible guardian to a child so lately used to the blessedness of a *home with her mother*—and withal, so shy and sensitive as to breathe freely only in an atmosphere of peace and affection, and Luckenough would have supplied a dark and dreary home for her whose melancholy temperament and recent bereavements rendered change of scene and the companionship of other children absolute necessities. It was for these several reasons that Mrs. Waugh was forced to consent that Thurston should carry his little adopted daughter to his own home. Thurston's household consisted now of himself, Mrs. Morris, his housekeeper, Alice Morris, her daughter, Paul Douglass, his own half-brother, poor Fanny, and lastly, Miriam.

Mrs. Morris was a lady of good family, but decayed fortune, of sober years and exemplary piety. In closing her terms with Mr. Willcoxen her one great stipulation had been that she should bring her daughter, whom she declared to be too "young and giddy" to be trusted out of her own sight, even to a good boarding school.

Mr. Willcoxen expressed himself rather pleased than otherwise at the prospect of Miriam's having a companion, and so the engagement was closed.

Alice Morris was a hearty, cordial, blooming hoyden, really about ten or eleven years of age, but seeming from her fine growth and proportions at least thirteen or fourteen.

Paul Douglass was a fine, handsome, well-grown boy of fourteen, with an open, manly forehead, shaded with clustering, yellow curls, as soft and silky as a girl's, and a full, beaming, merry, blue eye, whose flashing glances were the most mirth-provoking to all upon whom they chanced to light. Paul was, and ever since his first arrival in the house had been, "the life of the family." His merry laugh and shout were the pleasantest sounds in all the precincts of Dell-Delight. When Paul first heard that there was to be an invasion of "women and girls" into Dell-Delight, he declared he had rather there had been an irruption of the Goths and Vandals at once—for if there were any folks he could not get along with, they were "the gals." Besides which, he was sure now to have the coldest seat around the fire, the darkest place at the table, the backward ride in the carriage, and to get the necks of chickens and the tails of fishes for his share of the dinner. Boys were always put upon by the girls, and sorry enough he was, he said, that any were coming to the house. And he vowed a boyish vow—"by thunder and lightning"—that he would torment the girls to the very best of his ability.

Girls forsooth! *girls* coming to live there day and night, and eat, and drink, and sleep, and sit, and sew, and walk up and down through the halls, and parlors, and chambers of Dell-Delight—*girls*, with their airs, and affectations, and pretensions, and exactions—girls—pah! the idea was perfectly disgusting and offensive. He really did wonder at "Brother," but then he already considered "Brother" something of an old bachelor, and old bachelors would be queer.

But Thurston well knew how to smite the rock, and open the fountain of sympathy in the lad's heart. He said nothing in reply to the boy's saucy objections, but on the evening that little Miriam arrived, he beckoned Paul into the parlor where the child sat, alone, and pointing her out to him, said in a low tone,

"Look at her, she has lost all her friends—she has just come from her mother's grave—she is strange, and sad, and lonesome. Go, try to amuse her."

"I don't know how," said Paul.

"Go show her your books, or your engravings, or minerals, or dried beetles or whatever may be the present hobby or enthusiasm."

"She *is* a queer one. She is all black and white—black dress, curls, eyes, and eyebrows, and white face, hands, and neck! I say, brother, she is a sketch in Indian ink, with less light than shadow about her."

"You're a babbling boy—but go and talk to her."

"I say, brother, she is like Melrose Abbey by moonlight—'all framed of ebon and ivory,' and just as picturesque and solemn, too."

"You are an unfeeling boy, I am afraid. Don't you know that it is *grief* that makes her look so pale? She is just an orphan."

"I'm going to her, though I hardly know how," replied the lad, moving toward the spot where the abstracted child sat deeply musing.

"Miriam! Is *that* your name," he asked, by way of opening the conversation.

"Yes," replied the child, very softly and shyly.

"It's a very heathenish—oh, Lord!—I mean it's a very *pretty* name is Miriam, it's a Bible name, too. I don't know but what it's a saint's name also."

The little girl made no reply, and the boy felt at a loss what to say next. After fidgeting from one foot to the other he began again.

"Miriam, shall I show you my books—Scott's poems, and the Waverley novels, and Milton's Paradise, and—"

"No, I thank you," interrupted the girl, uneasily.

"Well, would you like to see my pictures—two volumes of engravings, and a portfolio full of sketches?"

"No, thank you."

"Shall I bring you my drawer full of minerals? I have got—"

"I don't want them, please."

"Well, then, would you like the dried bugs? I've got whole cards of them under a glass case, and—"

"I don't want them either, please."

"Dear me! I have not got anything else to amuse you with What *do* you want?"

Miriam began to weep. Mr. Willcoxen came up to her and took her hand gently, and spoke kindly, saying,

"What is the matter, my child?"

"This boy wont go away and let me alone," wept Miriam.

"'Boy,' humph!" said Paul, walking off in high dudgeon. Presently he walked back. "I say, little girl, I just want to speak one word, may I?"

"Yes," whispered Miriam.

"I just want to make a bargain with you. You don't like boys, I reckon?"

"No," murmured Miriam.

"That's you! We shall agree first rate, for neither do I like girls. I hate them like anything—so now for a bargain, if you will let me alone and never speak to me, I will let you alone and never speak to you. Come! will you agree?"

"Yes," said Miriam.

"That's right. I don't think you'll trouble me so much after all. I don't care if I give you a ride on my pony to-morrow. Say! would you like to ride on my pony?"

"No, thank you."

"I've got a canoe, then. I'll give you a ride in the canoe to-morrow—would you like that?"

"No I shouldn't."

"Well what *would* you like? Can't I do anything for you?"

"Yes, you can go-away and leave me alone. You promised to, and now you wont."

"Am I doing you any harm—aint I trying to please you?"

"No—you promised not to speak to me, and you keep on doing so."

Once more Paul walked off indignantly, but looking over his shoulder at the little shrinking, cowering form, he said to himself, "Poor little shy creature, she is just for all the world like that little wounded blackbird that I found and tried to save, but that fluttered away from me every time I touched it," then turning back, he said to her,

"Miriam, what makes you hate boys so?"

"We didn't have any boys at home," said the child, shrinking more into herself.

And Paul, seeing that his efforts at entertaining only distressed her, walked away. And after that Paul took her out of the offensive class of "gals," and called her the poor little wounded "blackbird," and wondered how he should ever be able to serve, without alarming her.

Miriam continued very shy, showing no more disposition to associate with Mrs. Morris or Alice, than with Paul—and delighting only in the company of Aunt Jenny, who had attended her from Old Fields.

The next day fortune favored Paul in his efforts to please Miriam. He had a tame white rabbit, and he thought that the child would like it for a pet—so he got up very early in the morning, and washed the rabbit "clean as a new penny," and put it under a new box to get dry while he rode to C—— and bought a blue ribbon to tie around its neck. This jaunt made Paul very late at breakfast, but he felt rewarded when afterwards he gave the rabbit to old Jenny, and asked her to give it to the little girl—and when he heard the latter say—"Oh, what a pretty little thing! tell Paul, thanky!" After this, by slow degrees, he was enabled to approach "the little blackbird" without alarming her. And after a while he coaxed her to take a row in his little boat, and a ride on his little pony—always qualifying his attentions by saying that he did not like girls as a general thing, but that she was different from others. And Mr. Willcoxen witnessed, with much satisfaction, the growing friendship between the girl and boy, for they were the two creatures in the world who divided all the interest he felt in life. The mutual effect of the children upon each other's characters was very beneficent; the gay and joyous spirits of Paul continually charmed Miriam away from those fits of melancholy, to which she was by temperament and circumstances a prey, while the little girl's shyness and timidity taught Paul to tame his own boisterous manners for her sake.

But of all the family Miriam was most attracted to the lonely sorrowful man who passed so many hours shut up in his study. A certain sympathy put the child *en-rapport* with the recluse. She felt that he was suffering, and longed for the ability to comfort him. Often she resolved in her mind the problem of how she should be able to serve or console him. Not the least obstacle was her shyness and timidity, her self-distrust—for what could a little girl do? But the heart is a good teacher.

There was a sitting-room with front windows commanding a view of the vista opening to the bay; this room was slightly repaired and furnished, just sufficiently to make it neat and comfortable; and it was usually occupied by Mrs. Morris and the two girls. There was an old-fashioned centre work-table, called a "sociable," with four drawers around it tending to a common centre, like spokes in a wheel, and around this table they would gather with their books or needle-work.

Paul, when he became somewhat reconciled to the girls, claimed the fourth drawer and the vacant seat at the table. This drawer of Paul's was a source of great diversion to Alice Morris, who called it a mental thermometer, by which she could always tell the state of the boy's mind. And many were the fluctuations it recorded, and it was a laughable mystery to his friends, whether he meant finally to distinguish himself in art, science, belles lettres, poetry or mechanics. One month geology would reign supreme, and Paul's drawer would be filled with minerals; next, accident would direct his attention to art, and the minerals would all be hustled away in a corner of the closet, and the drawer filled with engravings and pencil sketches, to be discarded in their turn to make room for dried bugs and impaled worms, to remain so long as natural history held the ascendency.

His next frenzy was for carving, and the bugs and butterflies were turned out to give place to cedar blocks, and slabs, and penknives, and designs for inkstands and work-boxes and miniature cathedrals, and panels for ornamental book-cases that were never destined to completion. This was a sore trial to a tidy woman like Mrs. Morris, as Paul, in his zeal for carving, surrounded himself for many feet in circumference with chips and shavings; and the governess would not have borne it long, had not little Miriam, perceiving her annoyance, quietly slipped down and gathered up the litter whenever it was made. In reward for which services Paul generously made the child a present of every piece of carving that he had spoiled.

But heavy as the dispensation of carving was felt to be, they had good reason to wish the reign of chips and shavings back again, when one evening Paul returned from the village, bringing with him a cracked flute, bought at second-hand, and a book of instructions, to teach himself to play upon it, and there followed a visitation of horrible discords that Paul called music. This nearly drove the quiet circle crazy, for Paul had no ear for tune, and not the slightest conception of variation in sound, except as it made more or less noise, and to *him*—"fa, so, la," stood for loud! louder!! loudest!!! he ever thought that he who had the best lungs, or made the most noise, was the greatest performer. And sometimes I have suspected an opera troupe of being under the same hallucination. Be that as it may, if poor Paul ever

Heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies—

he never succeeded in giving it utterance, but instead, awoke such discords of dreadful sounds as can only be imagined to exist in the future place of punishment for wicked musicians. Conversation was difficult, and study impossible. And the amateur would have been ordered off, only—where was he to go? As he himself argued with a very ill-used air, he "could not go in the kitchen to play, for, if ladies had no taste for melody, it wasn't to be expected that niggers would have; nor they hadn't either, for when he sat down there to play for them, they all went away but the cook, who was dressing the dinner, and she said it deafened her and made her head ache. And as for brother, he dare not go into *his* study and toot, for he wouldn't stand it a minute." Where was he to practice, sure enough? So they bore the infliction as merrily as they could, repaying the debt by many a jest at the performer's expense, and longing for the good weather to come, when Paul might take his flute abroad, and "toot" to the "hills and fields and streams," in true pastoral style.

Sometimes Mr. Willcoxen would come into the sitting-room. And in a moment Paul would stop blowing, put his flute into the drawer and shut it up.

But Miriam would slip quietly from her chair, and leave it vacant for the new comer. And Mr. Willcoxen would take it without even perceiving whose attention had left it for him. And that suited Miriam best; she felt very kindly towards him, but she did not like to be noticed.

As the spring opened, Mrs. Morris and her pupils became interested in the neglected flower-garden, and with the aid of a skillful gardener, they soon had it in nice order.

But Miriam noticed that her mournful guardian took no interest in their labor and its success. And though she glided into his study every morning in his absence, to place a vase of fragrant flowers on his table, she did not know whether her offering was welcome, or whether its presence was even perceived by the abstracted solitary.

One day in June, however, while the child was in the garden weeding her violets, and Mr. Willcoxen was walking up and down the central walk, absorbed in deep thought, she saw him stop, stoop down, and raise a blue morning-glory in his hand. He did not pluck it, but held it gently, and gazed long and strangely down into its vase-like cup.

It was the only morning-glory in the garden; its presence there was accidental. But Miriam resolved to go to her old home, where they grew abundantly, and bring some to plant; perhaps they might live if she should water them well. She would try, anyhow, for Mr. Willcoxen, who never noticed the fine roses and lilies and tulips and hyacinths, had studied the morning-glory. She knew, besides, that it was Marian's favorite flower. And, oh! at that thought came back the rushing tide of tender memories, freighted with love and sorrow insupportable, and the little girl started up and fled away into the forest, and threw herself upon her face to give way to those overwhelming bursts of sorrow that she always chose to indulge in solitude.

Mrs. Waugh had not forgotten her young protege. She came as often as possible to Dell-Delight, to inquire after the health and progress of the little girl.

It is not to be supposed, in any neighborhood where there existed managing mammas and unmarried daughters, that a young gentleman, handsome, accomplished, wealthy, and of good repute, should remain unmolested in his bachelorhood. Indeed the matrons and maidens of his own circle seemed to think themselves individually aggrieved by the young heir's mode of life. And many were the dinners and evening parties got up for his sake, in vain, for, to their infinite disgust, Thurston always returned an excuse instead of an acceptance.

At length the wounded self-esteem of the community received a healing salve, in the form of a report that Mr. Willcoxen had withdrawn from the gay world, in order the better to prepare himself for the Christian ministry. A report that, in twelve months, received its confirmation in the well established fact, that Thurston Willcoxen was a candidate for holy orders.

And in the meantime the young guardian did not neglect his youthful charge, but in strict interpretation of his assumed duties of guardianship, he had taken the education of the girl and boy under his own personal charge.

"Many hard-working ministers of the Gospel have received pupils to educate for hire. Why may not I, with more time at my command, reserve the privilege of educating my own adopted son and daughter," he said, and acting upon that thought, had fitted up a little school-room adjoining his library, where, in the presence of Mrs. Morris, Miriam and Paul pursued their studies, Mrs. Morris hearing such recitations as lay within her province, and Mr. Willcoxen attending to the classical and mathematical branches. Thus passed many months, and every month the hearts of the children were knitted closer to each other and to their guardian.

And Thurston Willcoxen "grew in favor, with God and man." His name became the synonym for integrity, probity and philanthropy. He built a church and a free-school, and supported both at his own expense. In the third year after entering upon his inheritance, he was received into holy orders; and two years after, he was elected pastor of his native parish. Thus time went by, and brought at length the next eventful epoch of our domestic history—that upon which Miriam completed her sixteenth year.

CHAPTER XL.

MIRIAM.

> "Her cheek too quickly flushes; o'er her eye
> The lights and shadows come and go too fast.
> The tears gush forth too soon, and in her voice
> Are sounds of tenderness too passionate
> For peace on earth."—*Mrs. Hemans.*

Six years had passed away. Thurston Willcoxen was the most beloved and honored man, as well as the most distinguished clergyman of his day and state. His church was always crowded, except when he changed with some brother minister, whose pulpit was within reach—in which case, a great portion of his congregation followed him. Many flattering "calls" had the gifted and eloquent country parson received to metropolitan parishes; but he remained the faithful shepherd of his own flock as long as they would hear his voice.

Thurston was young, healthful, and handsome; wealthy, talented, honored, and prosperous—what was wanted to complete his happiness? What, alas! Time, that soothes all other sorrows to sleep, has no opiate for remorse; Time, that had brought him wealth, fame, and love, brought him no *peace.*

The church, the school, and the asylum he had established, flourished well; yet he could not but feel acutely that had Marian's loving heart and clear head assisted him in their government and direction, they would have prospered better. Through all his nature he missed the twin woman-soul, and there was none to take her place—none! There were good and beautiful girls around him, and they were not indifferent to the many attractions of the young clergyman. His genius, his goodness, his eloquence, and a certain touching beauty and grace of look and tone and manner drew all hearts to himself. More than one maiden secretly worshiped the minister,—love came to him undesired, as fame came unsought. He had known Marian, his ideal woman, and even had his bitter sorrow for her supposed death been free from remorse, her memory still had rendered the charms of all other women powerless to win *her* place in his heart. He had seen Marian, and though years had passed, time and distance seemed only to idealize and hallow and glorify her image until her excellence appeared little less than angelic.

And thus, as year after year rolled on, he became more and more of a lonely, abstracted, and sorrowing man—shunning society, except when duty called him out. Little did they know, who wondered at his genius and eloquence, that wisdom had entered by the sorrow that had "touched his lips with fire." Little did they think who wondered at his perfect knowledge of the human heart, how it was by breaking his *own*, that he had found out all its secret mechanism—by letting the tempest sweep the bosom's harp, he had found out all the chords, and "knew their every tone." The honor of men, the love of dreaming girls, the admiration of all, was his dower already, and he would have been blessed with the beautiful friendship of woman, too, but for the want of that nearest and dearest woman—that second self—that twin soul, Marian! Had she been with him, then had he been in harmony with all outer cirles of social life and love. Then had there been no poetic maidens dreaming vain dreams of him, and eliciting no response, save that of a faint surprise and pity soon forgotten. Then had the friendship and admiration of women been congenial to his nature—added larger life to his life; *now* something was wanted between himself and them—it was woman's soul—the wife's soul united to his own to make all outer circles of affection harmonious and beautiful and beneficial. And thus it was, repulsing man's sympathy and woman's friendship, the lonely heart shrank more and more into itself.

With the exception of two days in the week, namely, Sundays when he preached, and Wednesdays set apart for parochial visits, he usually passed his mornings in his study, and his afternoons in rambling through the forest or on the beach.

Of all the world, perhaps his affections only moved towards Paul and Miriam; but even in these relations there was something wanting;—he was not *en rapport* with either of the young people, a chill atmosphere of distrust, *felt*, not understood, still less expressed, seemed to envelop him, and repel them.

Miriam, as she bloomed into womanhood, more than fulfilled the rich promise of beauty given by her infancy. She was one of those strange visions of beauty that sometimes surprise the beholder, and vanish, to leave behind a haunting dream to the half-delighted, half-incredulous memory. Her form and face were of the eastern type—a slight, elegant, lithe figure; swift, smooth, graceful motions; a liquid, low-toned voice; a thin, dark, piquant face; features sharply defined, yet softly and delicately finished; rich olive complexion, deepening and brightening into ripe bloom upon the cheeks and lips;—large liquid eyes, dark, fathomless, and splendid as Syrian midnight skies, hair of that burning blue black hue, tempered in torrid zones; which dropped in countless little spiral ringlets, crisp as grape tendrils, and glittering like jet down her temples, cheeks, and throat, just reaching and dancing lightly on the graceful neck. Miriam liked dark brilliant colors, and her usual dress was black or crimson, except at midsummer, when she wore only white. Her favorite flower was the crimson cypress vine—and at all the summer festivals its fiery stars wreathed her head, and glowed amid the glittering tendrils of black hair. Her young companions wondered at her preference, and whispered that it was the blood-stained flower of death. But Miriam had never heard, or never heeded the superstition. Of all the seasons of the year she loved the midsummer best, and of all hours she enjoyed most the starlit midnight, when all the earth was still—and in all the heavens there was neither moon nor cloud, nothing but the clear unfathomable sky, and its myriads of intensely brilliant stars. All her tastes were governed by the same characteristics of mind. In music she cared nothing for simple melodies and familiar household songs, dear to most hearts, but sacred anthems or high heroic martial strains had power to catch and wrap her soul in a sort of ecstatic enthusiasm. She had few books, and fewer favorites among them. Of poetry, Shakspeare's tragedies and historical plays, Milton's Paradise Lost, and Scott's metrical romances, were her preferences.

Notwithstanding her earnest and impassioned temperament, and, perhaps, *because* of it, Miriam was profoundly happy. She drew deep drafts of joy from the face of nature around her, from books, from painting, from music, from the affections of her heart, and from her sympathy with all that is high and heroic in human nature and human history.

She had not ceased to remember and to love her mother and Marian; but the image presented by memory was one of holy beauty—glorified saints, angels before the throne of God—so she thought of them.

The recollection of the vow by which she bound her soul, gave no painful anxiety, but a strange and fascinating interest to her future life.

In her childhood, Miriam had been too shy to speak to any one of her strange vow, and as she grew to womanhood, prudence held her silent upon the subject, while she kept her faculties ever upon the alert for the discovery of some clue that might eventually lead to the detection of the guilty.

She carefully preserved in memory, and often recalled to mind the slight indexes that she already had in possession—namely, beginning with Marian's return after her visit to Washington—her changed manner, her fits of reverie, her melancholy when she returned empty-handed from the post-office, her joy when she received letters, which she would read in secret and in silence, or when questioned concerning them, would gently but firmly decline to tell from whom or whence they came; the house-warming at Luckenough, where Marian suddenly became so bright and gay, and the evening succeeding, when she returned home through night and storm, and in such anguish of mind, that she wept all night; and the weeks of unexplained, unaccountable distress that followed this! All these things Miriam recalled, and studied if by any means they might direct her in the discovery of the guilty.

And her faithful study had eventuated in her assurance of one or two facts—or one or two links, perhaps we should say, in the chain of evidence. The first was, that Marian's mysterious lover had been present in the neighborhood, and, perhaps, in the mansion at the time of the house-warming at Luckenough—that he had met her once or more, and that his name was *not* Thomas Truman—that the latter was an assumed name, for, with all her observation and astute investigation, she had not been able to find that any one of the name of Truman had ever been seen or heard of in the county.

She was sure, also, that she had seen the man twice, both times in night and storm, when she had wandered forth in search of Marian.

She remembered well the strange figure of that man—the tall form shrouded in the black cloak—the hat drawn over the eyes—the faint spectral gleam of the clear-cut profile—the peculiar fall of light and shade, the decided individuality of air and gait—all was distinct as a picture in her memory, and she felt sure that she would be able to identify that man again.

Up to this time, the thought of her secret vow, and her life's mission, had afforded only a romantic and heroic excitement; but the day was fast approaching when these indexes she retained, should point to a clue that should lead through a train of damning circumstantial evidence destined to test her soul by an unexampled trial.

Paul Douglass had grown up to be a tall and handsome youth, of a very noble, frank, attractive countenance and manners. To say that he loved Miriam is only to say that he loved himself. She mingled with every thought, and feeling, and purpose of his heart. He could not bear the idea of a separate interest, far less of a separate existence from hers. He had cured himself of his habit of flirting with the muses, in turn, and had devoted himself to that god or goddess that presides over the art of healing; in other words, he had given up dilettanteism with the polite arts; frankly confessing that when he had made one line of verse, he never could get another to match it, and as for music, he did not know "Auld Lang Syne" from "Old Hundred," unless the singers would tell him; a fault that might have been as much with the musicians as with honest Paul's ear; and he had commenced and was diligently pursuing the study of medicine. Miriam had wished him to enter the army. "But no," said canny Scottish Paul; "I grant you that both are very attractive, but Miriam, I will be a doctor, and save men, instead of destroying them. And I tell you, Miriam, that I think the man that mends bones for a living quite as good a fellow as he who breaks them for the same purpose; and a faithful physician, in the time of pestilence, is a greater hero than all the plumed and gilded, sword and buckler butchers that ever killed, on sea or land, for patriotism, passion, pay, or plunder, from the time of Cain, when one brother rose up against the other, and slew him, to this time, when thousands of brethren rise up against other thousands, and slay them."

But Miriam's youthful heart was impressed with a passion for glory, without well understanding in what it consisted—she was inspired by pageantry, splendor, and martial music; and she argued the point with Paul, telling him that had it not been for those very "sword and buckler butchers" who bore the shock of battle in troublous times, and whose exposure abroad still secured our safety at home, the quiet citizen could not pursue his avocations in peace, nor would *he*, Paul, be sitting there "under his own vine and fig tree," delivering the oracles of unripe wisdom.

Paul would laugh, and reply that the glitter of the uniform dazzled her judgment. And so the controversy would end, or go on, as it might chance; the two young people never loving each other better than when they honestly differed, and frankly expressed their difference. And as for the youth, the very hours given to study were almost grudged, because they took him from the girl's society.

And when, at last, the time came that Paul had to leave home for Baltimore, to remain absent all winter, for the purpose of attending the course of lectures at the medical college, Miriam learned the pain of parting, and understood how impossible happiness would be for her, with Paul away, on naval or military duty, more than half their lives, and for periods of two, three, or five years; and after that she never said another word in favor of his wearing Uncle Sam's livery.

Miriam's affection for Paul was so profound and quiet, that she did not know its depth or strength. As she had not believed that parting from him would be painful until the event had taught her, so even now she did not know how intertwined with every chord and fibre of her heart, and how identical with her life, was her love of Paul. She was occupied by a more enthusiastic devotion to her "brother," as she called her guardian.

The mysterious sorrow, the incurable melancholy of a man like Thurston Willcoxen, could not but invest him with peculiar interest and even strange fascination for one of Miriam's enthusiastic, earnest temperament. She loved him with more than a daughter's love—she loved him with all the impassioned earnestness of her nature—her heart yearned as it would break with its wild, intense longing to do him some good, to cure his sorrow, to make him happy. There were moments when, but for the sweet shyness that is ever the attendant and conservator of such pure feeling, this wild desire was strong enough to cast her at his feet, to embrace his knees, and with tears beseech him to let her into that dark, sorrowful bosom, to see if she could make any light and joy there. She feared that he had sinned, that his incurable sorrow was the gnawing tooth of that worm that never dieth, preying on his heart; but she doubted, too, for what could he have done to plunge his soul in such a hell of remorse? He commit a crime? Impossible! the thought was treason; a sin to be repented of and expiated. His fame was fairest of the fair, his name most honored among the honorable. If not remorse, what then was the nature of his life-long sorrow? Many, many times she revolved this question in her mind. And as she matured in thought and affection, the question grew more earnest and importunate. Oh that he would unburthen his heart to her; oh! that she might share and alleviate his griefs. If "all earnest desires are prayers," then prayer was Miriam's "vital breath and native air" indeed; her soul earnestly desired, prayed, to be able to give her sorrowing brother peace.

CHAPTER XLI.

DREAMS AND VISIONS

"Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer cloud,
Without our special wonder?"—*Shakspeare.*

Winter waned. Mrs. Waugh had attended the Commodore to the South, for the benefit of his health, and they had not yet returned.

Mrs. Morris and Alice were absent on a long visit to a relative in Washington City, and were not expected back for a month. Paul remained in Baltimore, attending the medical lectures.

The house at Dell-Delight was very sad and lonely. The family consisted of only Thurston, Fanny and Miriam.

The spring was coming on. That season, which, from its associations, always aggravated the mental distress of Mr. Willcoxen, now oppressed him with unusual sadness, and day after day he immured himself in his study.

A change had also passed over poor Fanny's malady. She was no longer the quaint, fantastical creature, half-lunatic, half-seeress, singing snatches of wild songs through the house—now here, now there, now everywhere, awaking smiles and merriment in spite of pity, and keeping every one alive about her. Her bodily health had failed, her animal spirits departed; she never sang nor smiled, but sat all day in her eyrie chamber, lost in deep and concentrated study, her face having the careworn look of one striving to recall the past, to gather up and reunite the broken links of thought, memory and understanding.

Yes! the house was very sad and lonely; the *material* atmosphere was overcast, chill and gloomy; the *spiritual* atmosphere still, heavy, oppressed, as foreboding an approaching storm

Perhaps it was these combined causes that made Miriam peculiarly sensitive to the grief that was weighing upon the spirits of her guardian. Long days and long evenings she sat alone at her work table, in the old parlor, brooding over the cause of his wretchedness.

At last, one day, she received a letter from Paul, announcing the termination of the winter's course of lectures, the conclusion of the examination of medical candidates, the successful issue of his *own* trial, in the acquisition of his diploma, and finally his speedy return home.

Miriam's impulsive nature rebounded from all depressing thoughts, and she looked forward with gladness to the arrival of Paul.

He came towards the last of the week.

Mr. Willcoxen, roused for a moment from his sad abstraction, gave the youth a warm welcome.

Miriam received him with a bashful blushing joy.

He had passed through Washington City on his way home, and had spent a day with Mrs. Morris and her friends, and he had brought away strange news of them.

Alice, he said, had an accepted suitor, and would probably be a bride soon.

A few days after Paul's return, he sought a private interview with his brother. He found Mr. Willcoxen in his study, wrapped in dark sorrow as in a garment.

"How can a man endure such a life year after year?" thought Paul.

But the errand that he had come upon soon engaged his attention. He spoke to his brother, and at the friendly bidding of the latter, he sat down, and then, after much hesitation, managed to make known his wish to marry Miriam.

"You have addressed her upon this subject?" said Mr. Willcoxen.

"No, sir—not literally—no words have passed between us, but we could not fail to know each other's hearts. I love her, sir, and I am sure she—"

Paul arrested himself; he was too modest and respectful to finish his sentence.

"You mean to say that you are sure she would not be indifferent to your suit. I am glad to believe it, Paul."

And the melancholy recluse smiled for the first time in many years.

"Then I have your consent to mention this to Miriam?"

"Yes, Paul. When do you wish this affair to come off?"

"If I have a distinct explanation with Miriam," said practical Paul, I think I could better bear the inevitable delay. But I do not wish it to be prolonged beyond the time when I shall secure a good practice in this neighborhood."

"And that would be a long time, Paul. `Paul, you know it is written that 'the course of true love never did run smooth,' and, Paul, though a poet wrote it, it is sober, prosy, daily truth, as far as my observation informs me. But, my dear boy, there are very few rules without exceptions, and yours and Miriam's true love shall be the exception to this quoted rule—its course shall run smooth if I have power to remove obstructions—and I think I have. There is no absolute necessity, my dear Paul, that you should wait to marry until you can secure a professional practice here. That time, with even your best efforts, will be distant and uncertain. Miriam will be seventeen in May. Win her consent, wait a year longer until she shall be eighteen, and then marry her, if you please. All that I have is yours and hers. I have no dearer earthly wish than to witness your happiness, and I shall thank God that there remains to me this joy of hastening its completion."

This was said with a smile intended to be cheerful and encouraging, but which was, in sober truth, so sad that the sight of it, together with the thought of his brother's generosity, brought the tears rushing to Paul's eyes, and he regarded him with mournful earnestness.

"Go, boy—go!" said Thurston, in a gentle tone. "Go, and if you wish to give me a pleasurable feeling, win Miriam's consent to be your bride, and let me know when you are betrothed!"

Paul went to him once more, took and pressed his hand, and then left the study, and went to seek Miriam.

He found her in the old wainscoted parlor seated by the fire. She appeared to be in deep and painful thought. Her elbow rested on the circular work-table, her head was bowed upon her hand, and her face was concealed by the drooping black ringlets.

"What is the matter, dear sister?" he asked, in that tender, familiar tone, with which he sometimes spoke to her.

"Oh, Paul, I am thinking of our brother! Can nothing soothe or cheer him, Paul? Can nothing help him? Can we do him no good at all? Oh, Paul! I brood so much over his trouble!—I long so much to comfort him, that I do believe it is beginning to affect my reason, and make me 'see visions and dream dreams.' Tell me—do you think anything can be done for him?"

"Ah, I do not know! I have just left his study, dear Miriam, where I have had a long and serious conversation with him."

"And what was it about? May I know?"

"You must know, dearest Miriam, it concerned yourself and —me!" said Paul, and he took a seat by her side, and commenced and told her all that had passed during his interview with Thurston in the library.

Miriam replied,

"Paul, there is one secret that I have never imparted to you—not that I wished to keep it from you, but that nothing has occurred to call it out—"

She paused, while Paul regarded her in much curiosity.

"What is it, Miriam?" he at last inquired.

"I promised my dying mother, and sealed the promise with an oath, never to be a bride until I shall have been—"

"What, Miriam?"

"An avenger of blood!"

"MIRIAM!"

It was all he said, and then he remained gazing at her, as if he doubted her perfect sanity.

"I am not mad, dear Paul, though you look as if you thought so."

"Explain yourself, dear Miriam."

"I am going to do so. You remember Marian Mayfield?" she said, her face beginning to quiver with emotion.

"Yes! yes! well?"

"You remember the time and manner of her death?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Oh! Paul, that stormy night death fell like scattering lightning, and struck three places at once! But, oh! Paul, such was the consternation and grief excited by the discovery of Marian's assassination, that the two other sudden deaths passed almost unnoticed, except by the respective families of the deceased. Child as I then was, Paul, I think it was the tremendous shock of her sudden and dreadful death, that threw me entirely out of my centre, so that I have been erratic ever since. She was more than a mother to me, Paul; and if I had been born hers, I could not have loved her better—I loved her beyond all things in life. In my dispassionate, reflective moments, I am inclined to believe that I have never been quite right since the loss of Marian. Not but that I am reconciled to it—knowing that she must be happy—only, Paul, I often feel that something is wrong here and here," said Miriam, placing her hand upon her forehead and upon her heart.

"But your promise, Miriam—your promise," questioned Paul, with increased anxiety.

"Aye true! Well, Paul, I promised to devote my whole life to the pursuit and apprehension of her murderer; and never to give room in my bosom to any thought of love or marriage, until that murderer should hang from a gallows; and I sealed that promise with a solemn oath."

"That was all very strange, dear Miriam "

"Paul, yes it was—and it weighs upon me like lead. Paul, if two things could be lifted off my heart, I should be happy. I should be happy as a freed bird."

"And what are they, dear Miriam? What weights are they that I have not power to lift from your heart?"

"Surely you may surmise—the first is our brother's sadness that oppresses my spirits all the time; the second is the memory of that unaccomplished vow; so equally do these two anxieties divide my thoughts, that they seem connected—seem to be parts of the same responsibility—and I even dreamed that the one could be accomplished only with the other."

"Dearest Miriam, let me assure you, that such dreams and visions are but the effect of your isolated life—they come from an over-heated brain and over-strained nerves. And you must consent to throw off those self-imposed weights, and be happy and joyous, as a young creature should."

"Alas, *how* can I throw them off, dear Paul?"

"In this way—first for my brother's life-long sorrow, since you can neither cure nor alleviate it, turn your thoughts away from it. As for your *vow*, two circumstances combine to absolve you from it; the first is this—that you were an irresponsible infant, when you were required to make it—the second is, that it is impossible to perform it; these two considerations fairly release you from its obligations. Look upon these matters in this rational light, and all your dark and morbid dreams and visions will disappear; and we shall have you joyous as any young bird sure enough. And I assure you, that *your* cheerfulness will be one of the very best medicines for our brother. Will you follow my advice?"

"No, no, Paul! I cannot follow it in either instance! I cannot, Paul! it is impossible! I cannot steel my heart against sympathy with *his* sorrows, nor can I so ignore the requirements of my solemn vow. I do not by any means think its accomplishment an impossibility, nor was it in ignorance of its nature that I made it. No, Paul! I knew what I promised, and I know that its performance is possible. Therefore I cannot *feel* absolved! I must accomplish my work; and you, Paul, if you love me, must help me to do it."

"I would serve you with my life, Miriam, in anything reasonable and possible. But how *can* I help you? How can you discharge such an obligation? You have not even a clue!"

"Yes, I *have* a clue, Paul."

"You have? What is it? Why have you never spoken of it before?"

"Because of its seeming unimportance. The clue is so slight, that it would be considered none at all, by others less interested than myself."

"What is it, then? At least allow me the privilege of knowing, and judging of its importance."

"I am about to do so," said Miriam, and she commenced, and told him all she knew, and also all she suspected of the circumstances that preceded the assassination on the beach.

In conclusion, she informed him of the letters in her possession.

"And where are now those letters, Miriam? What are they like? What is their purport? It seems to me that they would not only give a hint, but afford direct evidence against that demoniac assassin. And it seems strange to me that they were not examined, with a view to that end.'"

"Paul, they were; but they did not point out the writer, even. There was a note among them—a note soliciting a meeting with Marian, upon the very evening, and upon the very spot when and where the murder was committed! But that note contains nothing to indicate the identity of its author. There are, besides, a number of foreign letters written in French, and signed 'Thomas Truman,' no French name, by-the-bye, a circumstance which leads me to believe that it must have been an assumed one."

"And those French letters give no indication of the writer, either?"

"I am not sufficiently acquainted with that language to read it in manuscript, which you know is much more difficult than print. But I presume they point to nothing definitely, for my dear mother showed them to Mr. Willcoxen, who took the greatest interest in the discovery of the murderer, and he told her that those letters afforded not the slightest clue to the perpetrator of the crime, and that whoever might have been the assassin, it certainly could not have been the author of those letters. He wished to take them with him, but mother declined to give them up, she thought it would be disrepect to Marian's memory to give her private correspondence up to a stranger, and so she told him. He then said that of all men, certainly, he had the least right to claim them, and so the matter rested. But mother always believed they held the key to the discovery of the guilty party; and afterward she left them to me, with the charge that I should never suffer them to pass from my possession until they had fulfilled their destiny of witnessing against the murderer—for whatever Mr. Willcoxen might think, mother felt convinced that the writer of those letters and the murderer of Marian was the same person."

"Tell me more about those letters."

"Dear Paul, I know nothing more about them; I told you that I was not sufficiently familiar with the French language to read them."

"But it is strange that you never made yourself acquainted with their contents by getting some one else to read them for you."

"Dear Paul, you know that I was a mere child when they first came into my possession, accompanied with the charge that I should never part with them until they had done their office. I felt bound by my promise, I was afraid of losing them, and of those persons that I could trust none knew French except our brother, and he had already pronounced them irrelevant to the question. Besides, for many reasons, I was shy of intruding upon brother."

"Does he know that you have the packet?"

"I suppose he does not even know *that.*"

"I confess," said Paul, "that if Thurston believed them to have no connection with the murder, I have so much confidence in his excellent judgment, that I am inclined to reverse my hasty opinion, and to think as he does, at least until I see the letters. I remember, too, that the universal opinion at the time was that the poor young lady had fallen a victim to some marauding waterman—the most likely thing to have happened. But. to satisfy you, Miriam, if you will trust me with those letters, I will give them a thorough and impartial study, and then if I find no clue to the perpetrator of that diabolical deed, I hope, Miriam, that you will feel yourself free from the responsibility of pursuing the unknown demon—a pursuit which I consider worse than a wild goose chase."

They were interrupted by the entrance of the boy with the mail bag. Paul emptied the contents of it upon the table. There were letters for Mr. Willcoxen, for Miriam, and for Paul himself. Those for Mr. Willcoxen were sent up to him by the boy. Miriam's letter was from Alice Morris, announcing her approaching marriage with Oliver Murray, a young lawyer of Washington, and inviting and entreating Miriam to come to the city and be her bridesmaid. Paul's letters were from some of his medical classmates. By the time they had read and discussed the contents of their epistles, a servant came in to replenish the fire and lay the cloth for tea.

When Mr. Willcoxen joined them at supper, he laid a letter on Miriam's lap, informing her that it was from Mrs. Morris, who advised them of her daughter's intended marriage, and prayed them to be present at the ceremony. Miriam replied that she had received a communication to the same effect.

"Then, my dear, we will go up to Washington and pass a few weeks, and attend this wedding, and see the inauguration of Gen. ———. You lead too lonely a life for one of your years, love. I see it affects your health and spirits. I have been too selfish and oblivious of you, in my abstraction, dear child; but it shall be so no longer. You shall enter upon the life better suited to your age."

Miriam's eyes thanked his care. For many a day Thurston had not come thus far out of himself, and his doing so now was hailed as a happy omen by the young people.

Their few preparations were soon completed, and on the first of March they went to Washington City.

CHAPTER XLII.

DISCOVERIES.

"And all too soon she sought and found,
In many a tale from those around
The proof of all she feared to know,
His present guilt, their future woe.
All circumstance that may compel
Full credence to the tale they tell;
And now her tortured heart and ear
Have nothing more to feel or fear."

On arriving at Washington, our party drove immediately to the Mansion House, where they had previously secured rooms.

The city was full of strangers from all parts of the country, drawn together by the approaching inauguration of one of the most popular Presidents that ever occupied the White House.

As soon as our party made known their arrival to their friends, they were inundated with calls and invitations. Brother clergymen called upon Mr. Willcoxen, and pressed upon him the freedom of their houses. Alice Morris, and Mrs. Moulton, the relative with whom she was staying, called upon Miriam, and insisted that she should go home with them to remain until after the wedding. But these offers of hospitality were gratefully declined by the little set, who preferred to remain together at their hotel.

The whole scene of metropolitan life, in its most stirring aspect, was entirely new and highly interesting to our rustic beauty. Amusements of every description were rife. The theatres, exhibition halls, saloons and concert rooms held out their most attractive temptations, and night after night were crowded with the gay votaries of fashion and of pleasure. While the churches, and lyceums, and lecture-rooms had greater charms for the more seriously inclined. The old and the young, the grave and the gay, found no lack of occupation, amusement and instruction to suit their several tastes or varying moods. The second week of their visit, the marriage of Alice Morris and Oliver Murray came off, Miriam serving as bridesmaid, Dr. Douglass as groomsman, and Mr. Willcoxen as officiating minister.

But it is not with these marriage festivities that we have to do, but with the scenes that immediately succeed them.

From the time of Mr. Willcoxen's arrival in the city, he had not ceased to exercise his sacred calling. His fame had long before preceded him to the capital, and since his coming he had been frequently solicited to preach and to lecture.

Not from love of notoriety—not from any such ill-placed vain glory, but from the wish to relieve some overtasked brother of the heat and burden of at least *one* day; and possibly by presenting truth in a newer and stronger light to do *some* good, did Thurston Willcoxen, Sabbath after Sabbath, and evening after evening, preach in the churches or lecture before the Lyceum. Crowds flocked to hear him, the press spoke highly of his talents and his eloquence, the people warmly echoed the opinion, and Mr. Willcoxen, against his inclination, became the clerical celebrity of the day.

But from all this unsought world-worship he turned away a weary, sickened, sorrowing man.

There was but one thing in all "the world outside" that strongly interested him—it was a "still small voice," a low-toned, sweet music, keeping near the dear mother earth and her humble children, yet echoed and re-echoed from sphere to sphere—it was the name of a lady, young, lovely, accomplished and wealthy, who devoted herself, her time, her talents and her fortune, to the cause of suffering humanity.

This young lady, whose beauty, goodness, wisdom, eloquence and powers of persuasion were rumored to be almost miraculous, had founded schools and asylums, and had collected by subscription a large amount of money, with which she was coming to America, to select and purchase a tract of land to settle a colony of the London poor. This angel girl's name and fame was a low, sweet echo, as I said before—never noisy, never rising high—keeping near the ground. People spoke of her in quiet places, and dropped their voices to gentle tones in mentioning her and her works. Such was the spell it exercised over them. This lady's name possessed the strangest fascination for Thurston Willcoxen—he read eagerly, whatever was written of her—he listened with interest, to whatever was spoken of her. Her name! it was that of his loved and lost Marian!—that in itself was a spell, but that was not the greatest charm—her character resembled that of his Marian!

"How like my Marian?" would often be the language of his heart, when hearing of her deeds. "Even so would my Marian have done—had *she* been born to fortune—as this lady was."

The name was certainly common enough, yet the similarity of both names and natures inclined him to the opinion that this angel-woman must be some distant and more fortunate relative of his own lost Marian. He felt drawn towards the unknown lady by a strange and almost irresistible attraction—and he secretly resolved to see and know her, and pondered in his heart ways and means by which he might with propriety seek her acquaintance.

While thus he lived two lives—the outer life of work and usefulness, and the inner life of thought and suffering—the young people of his party, hoping and believing him to be enjoying the honors heaped upon him, yielded themselves up to the attractions of society.

Miriam spent much of her time with her friend, Alice Murray.

One morning, when she called on Alice, the latter invited her visitor up into her own chamber, and seating her there, said, with a mysterious air,

"Do you know, Miriam, that I have something—the strangest thing that ever was—that I have been wanting to tell you for three or four days, only I never got an opportunity to do so, because Olly or some one was always present? But now Olly has gone to court, and mother has gone to market, and you and I can have a cozy chat to ourselves."

She stopped to stir the fire, and Miriam quietly waited for her to proceed.

"Now, why in the world don't you ask me for my secret? I declare you take so little interest, and show so little curiosity, that it is not a bit of fun to hint a mystery to you. Do you want to hear, or don't you? I assure you it is a tremendous revelation, and it concerns you, too!"

"What is it, then? I am anxious to hear?"

"Oh! you do begin to show a little interest; and now, to punish you, I have a great mind not to tell you; however, I will take pity upon your suspense; but first you must promise never, *never*, *n-e-v-e-r* to mention it again—will you promise?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, listen. Stop! get a good place to faint first, and *then* listen. Are you ready? One, two, three, *fire*. The Reverend Thurston Willcoxen is a married man!"

"What!"

"Mr. Thurston Willcoxen has been married for eight years past."

"Pshaw!"

"Mr. Willcoxen was married eight years ago, this spring, at a little Methodist chapel near the navy yard of this city, and by an old Methodist preacher, of the name of John Berry."

"You are certainly mad!"

"I am not mad, most noble 'doubter,' but speak the words of truth and soberness. Mr. Willcoxen was married privately, when and where I said, to a beautiful fair-haired lady, whose name heard in the ritual, was Marian. And my husband, Olly Murray, was the secret witness of that private marriage."

A wild scream, that seemed to split the heart from whence it arose, broke from the lips of Miriam—springing forward, she grasped the wrist of Alice, and with her wild eyes starting, straining from their sockets, gazed into her face, crying,

"Tell me! tell me! that you have jested! tell me that you have lied? Speak! speak!"

"I told you the Lord's blessed truth, and Olly knows it.

But, Miriam, for goodness sake don't look that way—you scare me almost to death! And whatever you do, *never* let anybody know that I told you this; because, if you did, Olly would be very much grieved at me; for he confided it to me as a dead secret, and bound me up to secresy, too; but I thought as it concerned you so much, it would be no harm to tell *you*, if you would not tell it again; and so when I was promising, I made a mental reservation in favor of yourself. And so I have told you; and now you mustn't betray me, Miriam,"

"It is false! all that you have told me is false! say that it is false! tell me so! speak! speak!" cried Miriam, wildly.

"It is not false—it is true as Gospel, every word of it—nor is it any mistake. Because Olly saw the whole thing, and told me all about it. The way of it was, that Olly overheard them in the congressional library arranging the marriage—the gentleman was going to depart for Europe, and wished to secure the lady's hand before he went—and at the same time, for some reason or other, he wished the marriage to be kept secret. Olly owns that it was none of his business, but that curiosity got the upper hand of him, so he listened, and he heard them call each other 'Thurston' and 'Marian'—and when they left the library, he followed them—and so, unseen, he witnessed the private marriage ceremony, at which they still answered to the names of 'Thurston' and 'Marian.' He did not hear their surnames. He never saw the bride again; and he never saw the bridegroom until he saw Mr. Willcoxen at our wedding. The moment Olly saw him he knew that he had seen him before, but could not call to mind when or where; and the oftener he looked at him, the more convinced he became that he had seen him first under some very singular circumstances. And when at last he heard his first name called 'Thurston,' the whole truth flashed on him at once. He remembered everything connected with the mysterious marriage. I wonder what Mr. Willcoxen has done with his Marian? or whether she died or whether she lives? or where he hides her? Well, some men *are* a mystery—don't you think so, Marian?"

But only deep and shuddering groans, upheaving from the poor girl's bosom, answered her.

"Miriam! Oh, don't go on so! what do you mean? Indeed, you alarm me! oh, don't take it so to heart! indeed, *I* wouldn't, if I were you! I should think it the funniest kind of fun! Miriam, I say!"

She answered not—she had sunk down on the floor, utterly crushed by the weight of misery that had fallen upon her.

"Miriam! now what in the world do you mean by this? Why do you yield so? *I* would not do it! I know it is bad to be disappointed of an expected inheritance, and to find out that some one else has a greater claim, but, indeed, *I* would not take it to heart so, if *I* were you. Why, if he *is* married, he may not have a family, and even if he *has*, he may not utterly disinherit *you*, and even if he *should*, I would not grieve myself to death about it if I were you! Miriam, look up, I say!"

But the hapless girl replied not, heard not, heeded not; deaf, blind, insensible was she to all—everything but to that sharp, mental grief, that seemed so like physical pain—that fierce anguish of the breast, that, like an iron hand, seemed to clutch and close upon her heart—tighter, tighter, tighter, until it stopped the current of her blood, and arrested her breath, and threw her into convulsions.

Alice sprang to raise her, then ran down stairs to procure restoratives and assistance. In the front hall she met Doctor Douglass, who had just been admitted by the waiter. To his pleasant greeting, she replied hastily, breathlessly,

"Oh, Paul! come—come quickly up stairs! Miriam has fallen into convulsions, and I am frightened out of my senses!"

"What caused her illness?" asked Paul, in alarm and anxiety, as he ran up stairs, preceded by Alice.

"Oh, I don't know!" (It could not have been what I said to her, and if it was, I must not tell,) added Alice, as she opened the door and ushered him into the chamber.

The details of sickness are never interesting. I shall not dwell upon Miriam's illness of several weeks; the doctors pro nounced it to be *angina pectoris*—a fearful and often fatal complaint, brought on in those constitutionally predisposed to it, by any sudden shock to mind or body. What could have caused its attack upon Miriam, they could not imagine. And Alice Murray, in fear and doubt, held her tongue and kept her own counsel. In all her illness, Miriam's reason was not for a moment clouded—it seemed preternaturally awake; but she spoke not, and it was observed that if Mr. Willcoxen, who was overwhelmed with distress by her dreadful illness, approached her bedside and touched her person, she instantly fell into spasms. In grief and dismay, Thurston's eyes asked of all around an explanation of this strange and painful phenomenon; but none could tell him, except the doctor, who pronounced it the natural effect of the excessive nervous irritability attending her disease, and urged Mr. Willcoxen to keep away from her chamber. And Thurston sadly complied.

Youth, and an elastic constitution, prevailed over disease, and Miriam was raised from the bed of death; but so changed in person and in manner, that you would scarcely have recognized her. She was thinner, but not paler—an intense, consuming fire burned in and out upon her cheek, and smouldered and flashed from her eye. Self-concentrated and reserved, she replied not at all, or only in monosyllables, to the words addressed to her, and withdrew more into herself.

At length, Doctor Douglass advised their return home. And therefore they set out, and upon the last of March, approached Dell-Delight.

The sky was overcast, the ground was covered with snow, the weather was damp, and very cold for the last of March. As evening drew on, and the leaden sky lowered, and the chill damp penetrated the comfortable carriage in which they traveled Mr. Willcoxen redoubled his attentions to Miriam, carefully wrapping her cloak and furs about her, and letting down the leathern blinds and the damask hangings, to exclude the cold; but Miriam shrank from his touch, and shivered more than before, and drew closely into her own corner.

"Poor child, the cold nips and shrivels her as it does a tropical flower," said Thurston, desisting from his efforts after he had tucked a woolen shawl around her feet.

"It is really very unseasonable weather—there is snow in the atmosphere. I don't wonder it pinches Miriam," said Paul Douglass.

Ah! they did not either of them know that it was a spiritual fever and ague alternately burning and freezing her very heart's blood—hope and fear, love and loathing, pity and horror, that striving together made a pandemonium of her young bosom. Like a flight of fiery arrows came the coincidences of the tale she had heard, and the facts she knew. That spring, eight years before, Mr. Murray said he had, unseen, witnessed the marriage of Thurston Willcoxen and Marian. That spring, eight years before, she knew Mr. Willcoxen and Miss Mayfield had been together on a visit to the capital. Thurston had gone to Europe, Marian had returned home, but had never seemed the same since her visit to the city. The very evening of the house-warming at Luckenough, where Marian had betrayed so much emotion, Thurston had suddenly returned, and presented himself at that manison. Yet in all the months that followed, she had never seen Thurston and Marian together. Thurston was paying marked and constant attentions to Miss Le Roy, while Marian's heart was consuming with a secret sorrow and anxiety that she refused to communicate even to Edith. How distinctly came back to her mind those nights when, lying by Marian's side, she had put her hand over upon her face and felt the tears on her cheeks. Those tears! the recollection of them now, and in this connection, filled her heart with indescribable emotion. Her mother, too, had died in the belief that Marian had fallen by the hands of her lover or her husband Lastly, upon the same night of Marian's murder, Thurston Willcoxen had been unaccountably absent, during the whole night, from the death-bed of his grandfather. And then his incurable melancholy from that day to this—his melancholy augmented to anguish at the annual return of this season

And then rising, in refutation of all this evidence, was his own irreproachable life and elevated character.

Ah! but she had—young as she was, heard of such cases before—how in some insanity of selfishness or frenzy of passion, a crime had been perpetrated by one previously and afterwards irreproachable in conduct. Piercing wound after wound smote these thoughts like swift coming arrows.

A young, immature woman, a girl of seventeen, in whose warm nature passion and imagination so largely predominated over intellect, was but too liable to have her reason shaken from its seat by the ordeal through which she was forced to go.

As night descended, and they drew near Dell-Delight, the storm that had been lowering all the afternoon came upon them. The wind, the hail, and the snow, and the snow-drifts continually forming, rendered the roads, that were never very good, now nearly impassable.

More and more obstructed, difficult and unrecognizable became their way, until at last, when within an eighth of a mile from the house, the horses stepped off the road into a covered gully, and the carriage was overturned and broken.

"Miriam! dear Miriam! dear child, are you hurt?" was the first anxious exclamation of both gentlemen.

No one was injured; the coach lay upon its left side, and the right side door was over their heads. Paul climbed out first, and then gave his hand to Mariam, whom Mr. Willcoxen assisted up to the window. Lastly followed Thurston. The horses had kicked themselves free of the carriage, and stood kicking yet.

"Two wheels and the pole are broken—nothing can be done to remove the carriage to-night. You had better leave the horses where they are, Paul, and let us hurry on to get Miriam under shelter *first*, then we can send some one to fetch them home."

They were near the park gate, and the road from there to the mansion was very good. Paul was busy in bundling Miriam up in her cloak, shawls and furs. And then Mr. Willcoxen approached to raise her in his arms, and take her through the snow; but,

"No! no!" said Miriam, shuddering and crouching closely to Paul. Little knowing her thoughts, Mr. Willcoxen slightly smiled, and pulling his hat low over his eyes, and turning up his fur collar and wrapping his cloak closely around him, he strode on rapidly before them. The snow was blowing in their faces, but drawing Miriam fondly to his side, Paul hurried after him.

When they reached the park gate, Thurston was laboring to open it against the drifted snow. He succeeded, and pushed the gate back to let them pass. Miriam, as she went through, raised her eyes to his form.

There he stood, in night and storm, his tall form shrouded in the long black cloak—the hat drawn over his eyes, the faint spectral gleam of the snow striking upward to his clear-cut profile, the peculiar fall of ghostly light and shade, the strong individuality of air and attitude.

With a half-stifled shriek, Miriam recognized the distinct picture of the man she had seen twice before with Marian.

"What is the matter, love? Were you near falling? Give me your arm, Miriam—you need us both to help you through this storm," said Thurston, approaching her.

But with a shiver that ran through all her frame, Miriam shrank closer to Paul, who, with affectionate pride, renewed his care, and promised that she should not slip again.

So link after link of the fearful evidence wound itself around her consciousness, which struggled against it, like Laocoon in the fatal folds of the serpent.

Now cold as if the blood were turned to ice in her veins—now burning as if they ran fire—she was hurried on into the house.

They were expected home, and old Jenny had fires in all the occupied rooms, and supper ready to go on the table, that was prepared in the parlor.

But Miriam refused all refreshment, and hurried to her room

It was warmed and lighted by old Jenny's care, and the good creature followed her young mistress with affectionate proffers of aid.

"Wouldn't she have a strong cup of tea? Wouldn't she have a hot bath? Wouldn't she have her bed warmed? Wouldn't she have a bowl of nice hot mulled wine? Dear, dear! she was so sorry, but it would have frightened *herself* to death if the carriage had upset with *her*, and no wonder Miss Miriam was knocked up entirely."

"No, no, no!"

Miriam would have nothing, and old Jenny reluctantly left her—to repose? Ah, no! with fever in her veins to walk up and down and up and down the floor of her room with fearful unrest. Up and down, until the candle burned low, and sunk drowned in its socket; until the fire on the hearth smouldered and went out; until the stars in the sky waned with the coming day; until the rising sun kindled all the eastern horizon; and then, attired as she was, she sank upon the outside of her bed, and fell into a heavy sleep of exhaustion.

She arose unrefreshed, and after a hasty toilet descended to the breakfast parlor, where she knew the little family awaited her.

"The journey and the fright have been too much for you, love; you look very weary; you should have rested longer this morning," said Mr. Willcoxen affectionately, as he arose and met her, and led her to the most comfortable seat near the fire.

His fine countenance, elevated, grave and gentle in expression, his kind and loving manner, smote all the tender chords of Miriam's heart.

Could that man be guilty of the crime she had dared to suspect him of?

Oh, no, no, no! never! every lineament of his face, every inflection of his voice, as well as every act of his life, and every trait of his character, forbade the dreadful imputation!

But then the evidence! the damning evidence! Her brain reeled with the doubt as she sank into the seat he offered her.

"Ring for breakfast, Paul! Our little housekeeper will feel better when she gets a cup of coffee."

But Miriam sprang up to anticipate him; and drew her chair to the table, and nervously began to arrange the cups and put sugar and cream into them, with the vague feeling that she must act as usual to avoid calling observation upon herself, for if questioned, how could she answer inquiries, and who could she make a confidant in her terrible suspicions?

And so through the breakfast scene, and so through the whole day she sought to exercise self-control. But could her distress escape the anxious, penetrating eyes of affection? That evening, after tea, when Mr. Willcoxen had retired to his own apartment, and the waiter had replenished the fire and trimmed the lamps and retired, leaving the young couple alone in the parlor—Miriam sitting on one side of the circular work-table bending over her sewing, and Paul on the other side with a book in his hand, he suddenly laid the volume down, and went round and drew a chair to Miriam's side, and began to tell her how much he loved her, how dear her happiness was to him, and to entreat her to tell him the cause of her evident distress. As he spoke, she became paler than death, and suddenly and passionately exclaimed,

"Oh, Paul! Paul! do not question me! You know not what you ask."

"My own Miriam, what mean you? I *ought* to know."

"Oh, Paul! Paul! I am one foredoomed, to bring misery and destruction upon all who love me; upon all whom I love."

"My own dearest, you are ill, and need change, and you shall have it, Miriam," he said, attempting to soothe her with that gentle, tender loving manner he ever used towards her.

But shuddering sighs convulsed her bosom, and,

"Oh, Paul! Paul!" was all she said.

"Is it that *promise* that weighs upon your mind, Miriam? Cast it out; you cannot fulfill it; impossibilities are not duties."

"Oh, Paul! would Heaven it *were* impossible! or that I were dead."

"Miriam! where are those letters you wished to show me?"

"Oh! do not ask me, Paul! not yet! not yet! I dread to see them. And yet—who knows? they may relieve this dreadful suspicion! they may point to another probability," she said, incoherently.

"Just get me those letters, dear Miriam," he urged gently.

She arose, tottering, and left the room, and after an absence of fifteen minutes, returned with the packet in her hand.

"These seals have not been broken since my mother closed them," said Miriam, as she proceeded to open the parcel.

The first she came to was the bit of a note without date or signature, making the fatal appointment.

"This, Paul," she said mournfully, "was found in the pocket of the dress Marian wore at Luckenough, but changed at home before she went out to walk the evening of her death. Mother always believed that she went out to meet the appointment made in that note."

"Paul took the paper with eager curiosity, to examine it. He looked at it, started slightly, turned pale, shuddered, passed his hand once or twice across his eyes, as if to clear his vision, looked again, and then his cheeks blanched, his lips gradually whitened and separated, his eyes started, and his whole countenance betrayed consternation and horror.

Miriam gazed upon him in a sort of hushed terror—then exclaimed,

"Paul! Paul! what is the matter? You look as if you had been turned to stone by gazing on the Gorgon's head; Paul! Paul!"

"Miriam, did your mother know this handwriting?" he asked, in a husky, almost inaudible voice.

"No!"

"Did she suspect it?"

"No!"

"Did *you* know or suspect it?"

"No! I was a child when I received it, remember; I have never seen it since."

"Not when you put it in my hand, just now?"

"No, I never looked at the writing?"

"That was most strange, that you should not have glanced at the handwriting when you handed it to me; *why didn't you?* Were you afraid to look at it? Miriam! why do you turn away your head? Miriam! answer me—do you know the handwriting?"

"No, Paul, I do not know it—*do you?*"

"No! no! how should I? but Miriam, your head is still averted. Your very voice is changed. Miriam! what mean you? tell me once for all. Do you *suspect* the handwriting?"

"How should I? *do you, Paul?*"

"No! no! I don't suspect it."

They seemed afraid to look each other in the face; and well they might be, for the written agony on either brow; they seemed afraid to hear the sound of each other's words; and well they might be, for the hollow, unnatural sound of either voice.

"It cannot be! I am crazy, I believe. Let me clear my—oh, Heaven! Miriam! did—was—do you know whether there was any one in particular on familiar terms with Miss Mayfield?"

"No one out of the family, except Miss Thornton."

"'Out of the family'—out of *what* family?"

"*Ours*, at the cottage."

"Was—did—I wonder if my brother knew her intimately?"

"I do not know; I never saw them in each other's company but twice in my life."

The youth breathed a little freer."

"Why did you ask, Paul?"

"No matter, Miriam. Oh! I was a wretch, a beast to think—"

"What, Paul?"

"There are such strange resemblances in—in—in—what are you looking at me so for, Miriam?"

"To find your meaning. In *what*, Paul? strange resemblances in *what*?"

"Why in *faces.*"

"Why then so there are, and in *persons* also; and sometimes in *fates;* but *we* were talking of *handwritings*, Paul."

"Were we? oh, true. I am not quite right, Miriam. I believe I have confined myself too much, and studied too hard. I am really out of sorts, never mind me! please hand me those foreign letters, love."

Miriam was unfolding and examining them; but all in a cold, stony, unnatural way.

"Paul," she asked, "wasn't it just eight years this spring since your brother went to Scotland to fetch you?"

"Yes, why?"

"Wasn't it to Glasgow that he went?"

"Yes, why?"

"Were not you there together in March and April, 182–?"

"Once more, yes! why do you inquire?"

"Because all these foreign letters directed to Marian, are postmarked Glasgow, and dated March or April, 182–"

With a low, stifled cry, and a sudden spring, he snatched the packet from her hand, tore open the first letter that presented itself, and ran his strained, blood-shotten eyes down the lines. Half suppressed, deep groans like those wrung by torture from a strong man's heart, burst from his pale lips, and great drops of sweat beaded on his agonized forehead; and then he crushed the letters together in his hand, and held them tightly, unconsciously, while his starting eyes were fixed on vacancy, and his frozen lips muttered,

"In a fit of frantic passion, anger, jealousy, even he might have been maddened to the pitch of doing such a thing! but as an act of base policy, as an act of forethought, oh! never, never, never!"

"Paul! Paul! speak to me, Paul. Tell me what you think. I have had foreshadowings long. I can bear silence and uncertainty no longer. *What find you in those letters?* Oh, speak, or my heart will burst, Paul."

He gave no heed to her or her words, but remained like one impaled; still, fixed, yet writhing, his features, his whole form and expression discolored, distorted with inward agony.

"Paul! Paul!" cried Miriam, starting up, standing before him, gazing on him: "Paul! speak to me. Your looks kill me. Speak, Paul! even though you can tell me little new. I know it all, Paul; or nearly all. Weeks ago I received the shock! it overwhelmed me for the time; but I survived it! but you, Paul! you! Oh! *how* you look! Speak to your sister, Paul! Speak to your promised wife."

But he gave no heed to her. She was not strong or assured —she felt herself tottering on the very verge of death or madness—but she could not bear to see him looking so—once more she essayed to engage his attention.

"Give me those letters, Paul—I can perhaps make out the meaning."

As he did not reply, she gently sought to take them from his hand. But at her touch he suddenly started up and threw the packet into the fire. With a quick spring Miriam darted forward, thrust her hand into the fire, and rescued the packet, scorched and burning, but not destroyed.

She began to put it out, regardless of the pain to her hands, He looked as if he were tempted to snatch it from her, but she exclaimed,

"No, Paul! no! you will not use force to deprive me of this that I must guard as a sacred trust."

Still Paul hesitated, and eyed the packet with a gloomy glance.

"Remember honor, Paul, even in this trying moment," said Miriam; "let honor be saved, if all else be lost."

"What do you mean to do with that parcel?" he asked in a hollow voice.

"Keep them securely for the present."

"And afterwards?"

"I know not."

"Miriam, you evade my questions. Will you promise me one thing?"

"What is that?"

"Promise me to do nothing with those letters until you have farther evidence."

"I promise you that."

Then Paul took up a candle and left the room, as if to go to his sleeping apartment; but on reaching the hall, he threw down and extinguished the light, and rushed as if for breath out into the open air.

The night was keen and frosty, the cold, slaty sky was thickly studded with sparkling stars, the snow was crusted over—it was a fine, fresh, clear, wintry night—at another time it would have invigorated and inspired him—now the air seemed stifling, the scene hateful.

The horrible suspicion of his brother's criminality had entered his heart for the first time, and it had come with the shock of certainty. The sudden recognition of the handwriting, the strange revelations of the foreign letters, had not only in themselves been a terrible disclosure, but had struck the whole "electric chain" of memory and association, and called up in living force many an incident and circumstance heretofore strange and incomprehensible; but now only too plain and indicative. The whole of Thurston's manner the fatal day of the assassination—his abstraction, his anxious haste to get away on the plea of most urgent business in Baltimore—business that never was afterwards heard of—his mysterious absence of the whole night from his grand farhet's death-bed—provoking conjecture at the time, and unaccounted for to this day—his haggard and distracted looks upon returning late the next morning—his incurable sorrow—his habit of secluding himself upon the anniversary of that crime—and now the damning evidence in these letters! Among them, and the first he looked at, was the letter Thurston had written Marian, to persuade her to accompany him to France, in the course of which his marriage with her was repeatedly acknowledged, being incidentally introduced as an argument in favor of her compliance with his wishes.

Yet Paul could not believe the crime ever premeditated—it was sudden, unintentional, consummated in a lover's quarrel, in a fit of jealousy, rage, disappointment, madness! Stumbling upon half the truth, he said to himself,

"Perhaps failing to persuade her to fly with him to France, he had attempted to carry her off, and being foiled, had temporarily lost his self-control, his very sanity—*that* would account for all that had seemed so strange in his conduct the day and night of the assassination, and the morning after."

There was agony—there was madness in the pursuit of the investigation. Oh! pitying heavens, how thought and grief surged and seethed in aching heart and burning brain!

And Miriam's promise to her dying mother—Miriam's promise to bring the criminal to justice! would she—*could* she now abide by its obligations?—*could* she prosecute her benefactor, her adopted brother, for murder?—*could her* hand be raised to hurl him down from his pride of place to shame and death? No, no, no, no! the vow must be broken, must be evaded, the right, even if it were the right, must be transgressed, heaven offended—anything! anything! anything but the exposure and sacrifice of their brother! If he had sinned, had he not repented? did he not suffer? what right had *she*, his ward, his protegè, his *child*, to punish him? "Vengeance is mine—I will repay, saith the Lord." No, Miriam must not keep her vow! She must; she must; she must; responded the moral sense, slow, measured, dispassionate, as the regular fall of a clock's hammer. "I will myself prevent her, I will find means, arguments and persuasions to act upon her. I will so appeal to her affections, her gratitude, her compassion, her pride, her fears, her love for me—I will so work upon her heart that she will not find courage to keep her vow." She will; she will; responded the deliberate conscience.

And so he walked up and down—vainly the fresh wind fanned his fevered brow—vainly the sparkling stars glanced down from holy heights upon him—*he* found no coolness for his fever in the air, no sedative for his anxiety in the stillness, no comfort for his soul in the heavens—*he* knew not whether he were indoors or out—whether it were night or day, summer or winter

—he knew not, wrapped as he was in the mantle of his own sad thoughts, suffering as he was in the purgatory of his inner life.

While Paul walked up and down, like a maniac, Miriam returned to her room to pace the floor until nearly morning, when she threw herself exhausted upon the bed, fell into a heavy sleep, and a third time, doubtless from nervous excitement or prostration, suffered a repetition of her singular vision, and awoke late in the morning, with the words, "Perform thy vow," ringing in her ears.

CHAPTER XLIII.

INDICTMENT.

> "And yet he seems not overcome,
> Although as yet his voice be dumb."

Several days passed in the gloomy mansion misnamed Dell-Delight. Miriam and Paul avoided each other like death. Both dreaded like death any allusion to the awful subject that lay so heavy upon the heart of each. Paul, unacquainted with her thoughts, and relying upon her promise to do nothing with the letters without further evidence, contented himself with watching her motions, feeling comparatively at ease as long as she should remain in the house; and being resolved to prevent her from going forth, or to accompany her if she persisted in leaving home.

With Miriam, the shock, the anguish, the struggle had well-nigh passed; she was at once subdued and resolved, like one into whom some spirit had entered and bound her own spirit, and acted through her. So strange did all appear to her, so strange the impassiveness of her own will, of her habits and affections, that should have rebelled and warred against her purpose, that she sometimes thought herself *not* herself, or insane, or the subject of a monomania, or some strange hallucination, a dreamer, a somnambulist, perhaps. And yet with matchless tact and discretion, she went about her deadly work. She had prepared her plan of action, and now waited only for a day very near at hand, the fourth of April, the anniversary of Marian's assassination, to put Thurston to a final test before proceeding further.

The day came at last—it was cold and wintry for the season. Towards evening, the sky became overcast with leaden clouds, and the chill dampness penetrated into all the rooms of the old mansion. Poor Fanny was muttering and moaning to herself and her "spirits" over the wood fire in her distant room.

Mr. Willcoxen had not appeared since breakfast time. Miriam remained in her own chamber; and Paul wandered restlessly from place to place through all the rooms of the house, or threw himself wearily into his chair before the parlor fire. Inclement as the weather was, he would have gone forth, but that *he too* remembered the anniversary, and a nameless anxiety connected with Miriam confined him to the house.

In the kitchen, the colored folks gathered around the fire, grumbling at the unseasonable coldness of the weather, and predicting a hail-storm, and telling each other that they never "'sperienced" such weather this time o' year, 'cept 'twas that spring Old Marse died—when no wonder, "'siderin' how he lived long o' Sam all his life."

Only old Jenny went in and out from house to kitchen. Old Jenny had enough to do to carry wood to the various fires. *She* had never "seed it so cold for de season nyther, 'cept 'twas de spring Miss Marian went to hebben, and not a bit o' wonder de yeth was cole arter *she* war gone—de dear, lovin' heart warm angel; 'deed I wondered how it ever come summer again, an' thought it was right down onsensible in her morning-glories to bloom out jest de same as ever, arter *she* was gone! An' what minds me to speak o' Miss Marian now, it war jes' seven years this night, since she 'parted 'dis life," said Jenny, as she stood leaning her head upon the mantle-piece, and toasting her toes at the kitchen fire, previous to carrying another armful of wood into the parlor.

Night and the storm descended together—such a tempest! such a wild outbreaking of the elements! rain and hail, and snow and wind, all warring upon the earth together—the old house shook, the doors and windows rattled, the timbers cracked, the shingles were torn off and whirled aloft—the trees were swayed and snapped; and as the storm increased in violence and roused to fury, the forest beat before its might, and the waves rose and overflowed the low land.

Still old Jenny went in and out from house to kitchen and kitchen to house, carrying wood, water, meat, bread, sauce, sweetmeats, arranging the table for supper, replenishing the fire, lighting the candles, letting down the curtains—and trying to make everything cozy and comfortable for the reassembling of the fireside circle. Poor old Jenny had passed so much of her life in the family with "the white folks," that all her sympathies went with *them*—and on the state of *their* spiritual atmosphere depended all her cheerfulness and comfort; and now the cool, distant, sorrowful condition of the members of the little family-circle—"ebry single mudder's son and darter ob 'em, superambalated off to derself like pris'ners in a jail-house"—as she said—depressed her spirits very much. Jenny's reaction from depression was always querulous. And towards the height of the storm, there *was* a reaction and she grew very quarrelsome.

"Sam's waystin'* roun' in dere," said Jenny, as she thrust her feet into the kitchen fire, before carrying in the urn; "Sam's waystin', I tells you all *good!* all werry quiet dough—no noise, no fallin' out, no 'sputin' nor nothin'—all quiet as de yeth jest afore a debbil ob a storm—nobody in de parlor 'cept 'tis Marse Paul, settin' right afore de parlor fire, wid one long leg poked east and toder west, wid the boots on de andirons like a spread-eagle! lookin' as glum as if I owed him a year's sarvice, an' nebber so much as a-sayin', 'Jenny, you poor old debbil, aint you a-cold?' an' me coming in ebry minnit wid the icicles a-jinglin' 'roun' my linsey-woolsey skurts, like de diamonds on de Wirgin Mary's Sunday gown. But Sam's waystin' now, I tells you all *good.* Lors Gemini, what a storm."

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* *Waysting*—going up and down.

"I 'members of no sich since dat same storm as de debbil come in to fetch ole marse's soul—dis berry night seven year past, an' he carried of him off all in a suddint whiff! jist like a puff of win'. An' no wonder, seein' how he done traded his soul to him for money!"

"An' Sam's here ag'in to-night! dunno who he's come arter! but he's *here,* now, I tells you all *good!*" said Jenny, as she took up the urn to carry into the parlor.

When she got there she could scarcely get to the fire; Paul took up the front. His immobility and unconsciousness irritated Jenny beyond silent endurance.

"I tell you all *what,*" she said, "I means to 'sign my sitewation! 'deed me! I can't kill mysef for dem as wouldn't even care 'nough for me to have a mass said for de 'pose o' my soul."

"What do you mean?" asked Paul, angrily, for confinement, solitude, bad weather, and anxiety, had combined to make *him* querulous too.

"I means how ef yer doesn't have a kivered way made from de house to de kitchen an' *back ag'in,* I gwine give up waitin' on de table, now mine I tell yer, 'deed me! an' now ef you likes, yer may jes' go an' tell Marse Rooster."

"'Marse Rooster!'" will you ever give up that horrid nonsense. Why you old—! Is my brother—is your master a barn-door chicken-cock, that you call him 'Rooster?'" asked the young man, snappishly.

"Well, *Shrooster,* den, ef you wants me to wring my tongue in two. Ef people's sponsors in baptism will gib der chillun such heathen names, how de debbil any Christian 'oman gwine to twis' her tongue roun' it? I thanks my 'Vine Marster dat my sponsors in baptism named me arter de bressed an' hooly S'int Jane—who has 'stained an' 's'ported me all my days; an' 'ill detect *now,* dough you do try to break my poor ole heart 'long wid onkindness at my ole ages o' life! But what's de use o' talkin'—Sam's waystin'!" And so saying, Jenny gave the finishing touches to the arrangement of the table, and then seized the bell, and rang it with rather needless vigor and violence, to bring the scattered members of the family together.

They came—slowly and singly—and drew around the table, more like ghosts than living persons—a few remarks upon the storm—and then they sunk into silence—and as soon as the gloomy meal was over, one by one they dropped away from the room—first went poor Fanny, then Mr. Willcoxen, then Miriam.

"Where are *you* going, Miriam?" asked Paul, as the latter was leaving the room.

"To my chamber."

And before he could farther question, or longer detain her, she pressed his hand and went out. And Paul, with a deep sigh and a strangely foreboding heart, sank back into his seat.

When Miriam reached her bed-room, she carefully closed and locked the door, went to her bureau, opened the top-drawer, and took from it a small oblong mahogany glove-box. She unlocked the latter, and took out a small parcel, which she unwrapped and laid before her upon the bureau.

It was the xyphias poniard.

The weapon had come into her possession some time before in the following manner: During the first winter of Paul Douglass's absence from home, Mr. Willcoxen had emancipated several of his slaves and provided means for their emigration to Liberia. They were to sail early in March. Among the number was Melchisedek. A few days previous to their departure, this man had come to the house, and sought the presence of his youthful mistress, when he knew her to be alone in the parlor, and with a good deal of mystery and hesitation had laid before her a dagger which he said he should rather have given to "Marster Paul," if the latter had been at home. He had picked it up near the water's edge on the sands the night of Miss Mayfield's death, which "Marster" had taken so to heart, that he was afraid to harrow up his feelings by bringing it to him a second time—but that as it was an article of value, he did not like to take it away with him. And he begged Miss Miriam to take charge of it. And Miriam had taken it, and with surprise, but without the slightest suspicion, had read the name of "Thurston Willcoxen" carved upon its handle. To all her questions, Melchisedek had given evasive answers, or remained obstinately silent—being determined not to betray his master's confidence by revealing his share in the events of that fatal night. Miriam had taken the little instrument, wrapped it carefully in paper, and locked it in her old-fashioned long glove-box. And from that day to this she had not opened it.

Now, however, she had taken it out with a fixed purpose, and she stood and gazed upon it. Presently she took it up, rolled it in the paper, took her lamp, and slowly left her room, and passed along the passages leading to Mr. Willcoxen's library.

The storm howled and raved as she went, and the strong blast, driving through the dilapidated window-sashes, nearly extinguished her light before she reached the study door.

She blew out the light and set down the lamp, and rapped at the door. Again and again she rapped, without awakening any response from within.

Then she turned the latch, opened the door, and entered. No wonder she had received no answer.

The abstracted man before her seemed dead to every sight and sound around him. He sat before the table in the middle of the room, his elbow on the mahogany; his face bowed upon his hand, his haggard countenance revealing a still, speechless despair as awful as it was profound.

Miriam approached and stood by him, her breath went by his cheek, so near she stood, and yet her presence was unheeded. She stooped to see the object upon which he gazed—the object that now shut out all the world from his sight—it was a long bright tress of golden auburn hair.

"Mr. Willcoxen!"

He did not hear her—how should he hear her low tones, when he heard not the cannonading of the storm that shook the house to its foundation?

"Mr. Willcoxen!" she said once more.

But he moved not a muscle.

"Mr. Willcoxen!" she repeated, laying her hand upon his arm.

He looked up. The expression of haggard despair softened out of his countenance.

"Is it you, my dear?" he said. "What has brought you here, Miriam? Were you afraid of the storm? There is no danger, dear child—it has nearly expended its force, and will soon be over—but sit down."

"Oh, no! it is not the storm that has brought me here though I scarcely remember a storm so violent at this season of the year,—except one—this night seven years ago—the night that Marian Mayfield was murdered!"

He started—it is true that he had been thinking of the same dread tragedy—but to hear it suddenly mentioned, pierced him like an unexpected sword thrust.

Miriam proceeded—speaking in a strange, level, monotone—as if unwilling or afraid to trust her voice far,

"I came this evening to restore a small but costly *article of virtu*, belonging to you, and left in my care some time ago, by the boy Melchisedek. It is an antique dagger—somewhat rusty and spotted—here it is."

And she laid the poniard down upon the tress of hair before him.

He sprang up as if it had been a viper—his whole frame shook, and the perspiration started from his livid forehead.

Miriam, keeping her eye upon him, took the dagger up.

"It is *very* rusty, and very much streaked," she said. "I wonder what these dark streaks can be? They run along the edge, from the extreme point of the blade, upwards towards the handle—they look to me like the stains of blood—as if a murderer had stabbed his victim with it, and in his haste to escape, had forgotten to wipe the blade, but had left the blood upon it, to curdle and corrode the steel—see! don't it look so to you?" she said, approaching him, and holding the weapon up to his view.

"Girl! girl! what do you mean?" he exclaimed, throwing his hand across his eyes, and hurrying across the room.

Miriam flung down the weapon with a force that made its mettle ring upon the floor, and hastening after him, she stood before him; her dark eyes fixed upon his, streaming with insufferable and consuming fire, that seemed to burn through into his brain. She said,

"I have heard of fiends in the human shape, nay, I have heard of Satan in the guise of an angel of light! Are you such that stand before me now?"

"Miriam, what do you mean?" he asked, in sorrowful astonishment.

"This is what I mean! That the mystery of Marian Mayfield's fate, the secret of your long remorse, is no longer hidden! I charge you with the murder of Marian Mayfield!"

"Miriam, you are mad!"

"Oh! well for me—and better still for you if I *were* mad!"

He was tremendously shaken, more by the vivid memories she recalled, than by the astounding charge she made.

"In the name of Heaven, what leads you to imagine such impossible guilt!"

"Good knowledge of the facts—that this month, *eight* years ago, in the little Methodist chapel of the navy yard, in Washington City, you made Marian Mayfield your wife—that this night seven years since, in just such a storm as this, on the beach below Pine Bluff, you met and murdered Marian Willcoxen! And, moreover, I assure you, that these facts which I tell you now, to-morrow I will lay before a magistrate, together with all the corroborating proof in my possesssion!"

"And what proof can you have?"

"A gentleman who, unknown and unsuspected, witnessed the private marriage ceremony between yourself and Marian; a packet of French letters, written by yourself from Glasgow, to Marian, in St. Mary's, in the spring of 1823; a note found in the pocket of her dress, appointing the fatal meeting on the beach at which she perished. Two physicians, who can testify to your unaccountable absence from the death-bed of your parent on the night of the murder, and also to the distraction of your manner when you returned late the next morning."

"And this," said Thurston, gazing in mournful amazement upon her; "this is the child that I have nourished and brought up in my house! She can believe me guilty of such atrocious crime—she can aim at my honor and my life such a deadly blow?"

"Alas! alas! it is my duty! it is my fate! I cannot escape it! I have bound my soul by a fearful oath! I cannot evade it! I shall not survive it! Oh, all the Heaven is black with doom, and all the earth tainted with blood!" cried Miriam, wildly.

"You are insane, poor girl! you are insane!" said Thurston, pityingly.

"Would Heaven I were! would Heaven I were! but I am not! I am not! Too well I remember I have bound my soul by an oath to seek out Marian's destroyer, and deliver him up to death! And I must do it! I must do it! though my heart break—as it will break in the act!"

"And you believe me to be guilty of this awful crime!"

"There stands the fearful evidence! Would Heaven it did not exist! oh! would Heaven it did not!"

"Listen to me, dear Miriam," he said calmly, for he had now recovered his self-possession. "Listen to me—I am perfectly guiltless of the crime you impute to me. How is it possible that I could be otherwise than guiltless. Hear me explain the circumstances that have come to your knowledge," and he attempted to take her hand to lead her to a seat. But with a slight scream, she snatched her hand away, saying wildly,

"*Touch me not!* your touch thrills me to sickness! to faintness! curdles—turns back the current of blood in my veins!"

"You think this hand a blood-stained one?"

"The evidence! the evidence!"

"I can explain that evidence. Miriam, my child, sit down—at any distance from me you please—only let it be near enough for you to hear. Did I believe you quite sane, Miriam, grief and anger might possibly seal my lips upon this subject—but believing you partially deranged—from illness and other causes—I will defend myself to you. Sit down and hear me."

Miriam dropped into the nearest chair.

Mr. Willcoxen took another, and commenced—

"You have received some truth, Miriam. How it has been presented to you, I will not ask now. I may presently. I was married, as you have somehow ascertained, to Marian Mayfield, just before going to Europe. I corresponded with her from Glasgow. I did appoint a meeting with her on the beach, upon the fatal evening in question—for what purpose that meeting was appointed, it is bootless to tell you, since the meeting never took place—for some hours before I should have set out to keep my appointment, my grandfather was stricken with apoplexy. I did not wish to leave his bedside until the arrival of the doctor. But when the evening wore on, and the storm approached, I grew uneasy upon Marian's account, and sent Melchisedek in the gig to fetch her from the beach to this house—never to leave it. Miriam, the boy reached the sands only to find her dying. Terrified half out of his senses, he hurried back and told me this story. I forgot my dying relative—forgot everything, but that my wife lay wounded and exposed on the beach. I sprung upon horseback, and galloped with all possible haste to the spot. By the time I had got there the storm had reached its height, and the beach was completely covered with the boiling waves. My Marian had been carried away. I spent the wretched night in wandering up and down the bluff above the beach, and calling on her name. In the morning I returned home to find my grandfather dead, and the family and physicians wondering at my strange absence at such a time. That, Miriam, is the story."

Miriam made no comment whatever. Mr. Willcoxen seemed surprised and grieved at her silence.

"What have you now to say, Miriam?"

"Nothing."

"'Nothing?'—what do you think of my explanation?"

"I think nothing. My mind is in an agony of doubt and conjecture. I must be governed by stern facts—not by my own prepossessions. I must act upon the evidences in my possession—not upon your explanation of them," said Miriam distractedly, as she arose to leave the room.

"And you will denounce me, Miriam?"

"It is my insupportable duty! it is my fate! my doom! for it will kill me!"

"Yet you will do it!"

"I will."

"Yet turn, dear Miriam! Look on me once more! take my hand! since you act from necessity, do nothing from anger—turn and take my hand."

She turned and stood—such a picture of tearless agony! She met his gentle, compassionate glance—it melted—it subdued her.

"Oh! would Heaven that I might die, rather than do this thing! would Heaven I might die! for my heart turns to you; it turns, and I love you so—oh! I love you so! never, never so much as now! my brother! my brother!" and she sunk down and seized his hands and wept over them.

"What, Miriam! do you love me, believing me to be guilty?"

"To *have been* guilty—not to *be* guilty—you have suffered remorse—you have repented, these many long and wretched years. Oh! surely repentance washes out guilt!"

"And you can now caress and weep over my hands, believing them to have been crimsoned with the life-stream of your first and best friend?"

"Yes! yes! yes! yes! Oh! would these tears, my very heart sobs forth, might wash them pure again! Yes! yes! whether you be guilty or not, my brother! the more I listen to my heart, the more I love you, and I cannot help it!"

"It is because your heart is so much wiser than your head, dear Miriam! Your heart divines the guiltlessness that your reason refuses to credit! Do what you feel that you must, dear Miriam—but, in the meantime, let us still be brother and sister—embrace me once more."

With anguish bordering on insanity, she threw herself into his arms for a moment—was pressed to his heart, and then breaking away, she escaped from the room to her own chamber. And there, with her half-crazed brain and breaking heart—like one acting or forced to act in a ghastly dream, she began to arrange her evidence—collect the letters, the list of witnesses and all, preparatory to setting forth upon her fatal mission in the morning.

With the earliest dawn of morning, Miriam left her room. In passing the door of Mr. Willcoxen's chamber, she suddenly stopped—a spasm seized her heart, and convulsed her features—she clasped her hands to pray, then, as if there were wild mockery in the thought, flung them fiercely apart, and hurried on her way. She felt that she was leaving the house never to return, she thought that she should depart without encountering any of its inmates. She was surprised, therefore, to meet Paul in the front passage. He came up and intercepted her—

"Where are you going so early, Miriam?"

"To Colonel Thornton's."

"What? before breakfast?"

"Yes."

He took both of her hands, and looked into her face—her pallid face—with all the color concentrated in a dark crimson spot upon either cheek—with all the life burning deep down in the contracted pupils of the eyes.

"Miriam, you are not well—come, go into the parlor," he said, and attempted to draw her towards the door.

"No, Paul, no! I must go out," she said, resisting his efforts.

"But why?"

"What is it to you? Let me go."

"It is everything to me, Miriam, because I suspect your errand. Come into the parlor. This madness must not go on."

"Well, perhaps I am mad, and my words and acts may go for nothing. I hope it may be so."

"Miriam, I must talk with you—not here—for we are liable to be interrupted every instant. Come into the parlor, at least for a few moments."

She no longer resisted that slight plea, but suffered him to lead her in. He gave her a seat, and took one beside her, and took her hand in his, and began to urge her to give up her fatal purpose. He appealed to her, through reason, through religion, through all the strongest passions and affections of her soul—through her devotion to her guardian—through the gratitude she owed him—through their mutual love, that must be sacrificed, if her insane purpose should be carried out. To all this she answered,

"I think of nothing concerning myself, Paul—I think only of him, there is the anguish."

"You are insane, Miriam; yet, crazy as you are, you may do a great deal of harm—much to Thurston, but much more to *yourself*. It is not probable that the evidence you think you have, will be considered by any magistrate of sufficient importance to be acted upon against a man of Mr. Willcoxen's life and character."

"Heaven grant that such may be the case."

"Attend! collect your thoughts—the evidence you produce will probably be considered unimportant, and quite unworthy of attention; but what will be thought of you, who volunteer to offer it?"

"I had not reflected upon that—and now you mention it, I do not care."

"And if, on the other hand, the testimony which you have to offer, be considered ground for indictment, and Thurston is brought to trial, and acquitted, as he surely would be—"

"Aye! Heaven send it!"

"And the whole affair blown all over the country—how would *you* appear?"

"I know not, and care not, so he is cleared; Heaven grant I may be the only sufferer! I am willing to take the infamy."

"You would be held up before the world as an ingrate, a domestic traitress, and unnatural monster. You would be hated of all—your name and history become a tradition of almost impossible wickedness."

"Ha! why, *do you think*, that in such an hour as this, *I care for myself*? No, no! no, no! Heaven grant that it may be as you say—that my brother be acquitted, and I only may suffer! I am willing to suffer shame and death for him whom I denounce! Let me go, Paul; I have lost too much time here."

"Will nothing induce you to abandon this wicked purpose?"

"Nothing on earth, Paul!"

"Nothing?"

"No! so help me Heaven! Give way—let me go, Paul."

"You must not go, Miriam."

"I must and will—and that directly—stand aside."

"Then you shall not go."

"Shall not?"

"I said SHALL not."

"Who will prevent me?"

"*I* will! You are a maniac, Marian, and must be restrained from going abroad, and setting the county in a conflagration."

"You will have to guard me very close for the whole of my life, then."

At that moment the door was quietly opened, and Mr. Willcoxen entered.

Miriam's countenance changed fearfully, but she wrung her hand from the clasp of Paul's, and hastened towards the door. Paul sprang forward and intercepted her.

"What does this mean?" asked Mr. Willcoxen, stepping up to them.

"It means that she is mad, and will do herself or somebody else much mischief," cried Paul, sharply

"For shame, Paul! Release her instantly," said Thurston, authoritatively.

"Would you release a lunatic, bent upon setting the house on fire?" expostulated the young man, still holding her.

"She is no lunatic; let her go instantly, sir."

Paul, with a groan, complied.

Miram hastened onward, cast one look of anguish back to

Thurston's face, rushed back, and threw herself upon her knees at his feet, clasped his hands, and cried,

"I do not ask you to pardon me—I dare not! But God deliver you! if it brand me and my accusation with infamy! and God forever bless you!" then rising, she fled from the room.

The brothers looked at each other.

"Thurston, do you know where she has gone? what she intends to do?"

"Yes."

"You do?"

"Assuredly."

"And you would not prevent her?"

"Most certainly not."

Paul was gazing into his brother's eyes, and, as he gazed, every vestige of doubt and suspicion vanished from his mind; it was like the sudden clearing up of the sky, and shining forth of the sun; he grasped his brother's hands with cordial joy.

"God bless you, Thurston! I echo her prayer. God forever bless you! But, Thurston, would it not have been wiser to prevent her going out?"

"How? would you have used force with Miriam? restrained her personal liberty?"

"Yes! I would have done so!"

"That would have been not only wrong, but useless; for if her strong affections for us were powerless to restrain her, be sure that physical means would fail; she would make herself heard in some way, and thus make our cause much worse. Besides I should loathe, for myself, to resort to any such expedients."

"But she may do so much harm. And you?"

"I am prepared to meet what comes!"

"Strange infatuation! that *she* should believe you to be—I will not wrong you by finishing the sentence."

"She does not at heart believe me guilty—her mind is in a storm. She is bound by her oath to act upon the *evidence* rather than upon her own feelings, and that evidence is much stronger against me, Paul, than *you* have any idea of. Come into my study, and I will tell you the whole story."

And Paul followed him thither.

Some hours later in that day, Colonel Thornton was sitting, in his capacity of police magistrate, in his office at C——. The room was occupied by about a dozen persons, men and women, black and white. He had just got through with one or two petty cases of debt or theft, and had up before him a poor, half-starved "White Herring," charged with sheep-stealing; when the door opened, and a young girl, closely veiled, entered and took a seat in the farthest corner from the crowd. The case of the poor man was soon disposed of—the evidence was not positive—the compassionate magistrate leaned to the side of mercy, and the man was discharged, and went home most probably to dine upon mutton. This being the last case, the magistrate arose and ordered the room to be cleared of all who had no further business with him.

When the loungers had left the police office, the young girl came forward, stood before the magistrate, and raised her veil, revealing the features of Miriam.

"Good morning, Miss Shields," said Colonel Thornton; and neither the countenance nor manner of this suave and stately gentleman of the old school, revealed the astonishment he really felt on seeing the young lady in such a place. He arose, and courteously placed her a chair, reseated himself, and turned towards her, and respectfully awaited her communication.

"Colonel Thornton, you remember Miss Mayfield, and the manner of her death, that made some stir here about seven years ago?"

The face of the old gentleman suddenly grew darkened and slightly convulsed, as the face of the sea when clouds and wind pass over it.

"Yes, young lady, I remember."

"I have come to denounce her murderer."

Colonel Thornton took up his pen, and drew towards him a blank form of a writ, and sat looking towards her, and waiting for her further words.

Her bosom heaved, her face worked, her voice was choked and unnatural, as she said—

"You will please to issue a warrant for the arrest of Thurston Willcoxen."

Colonel Thornton laid down his pen, arose from his seat, and took her hand and gazed upon her with an expression of blended surprise and compassion.

"My dear young lady, you are not very well. May I inquire —are your friends in town, or are you here alone?"

"I am here alone. Nay, I am not mad, Colonel Thornton, although your looks betray that you think me so."

"No, no, not mad, only indisposed," said the Colonel, in no degree modifying his opinion.

"Colonel Thornton, if there is anything strange and eccentric in my looks and manner, you must set it down to the strangeness of the position in which I am placed."

"My dear young lady, Miss Thornton is at the hotel to-day. Will you permit me to take you to her?"

"You will do as you please, Colonel Thornton, after you shall have heard my testimony, and examined the proofs I have to lay before you. Then I shall permit you to judge of my soundness of mind as you will, premising, however, that my sanity or insanity, can have no possible effect upon the proofs that I submit," she said, laying a packet upon the table between them.

Something in her manner now compelled the magistrate to give her words an attention for which he blamed himself, as for a gross wrong, towards his favorite clergyman.

"Do I understand you to charge Mr. Willcoxen with the death of Miss Mayfield?"

"Yes," said Miriam, bowing her head.

"What cause, young lady, can you possibly have, for making such a monstrous and astounding accusation?"

"I came here for the purpose of telling you, if you will permit me. Nor do I, since you doubt my reason, ask you to believe my statement, unsupported by proof."

"Go on, young lady; I am all attention."

"Will you administer the usual oath?"

"No, Miss Shields. I will hear your story first in the capacity of friend."

"And you think that the *only* capacity in which you will be called upon to act? Well, may Heaven grant it," said Miriam, and she began, and told him all the facts that had recently come to her knowledge, ending by placing the packet of letters in his hands.

While she spoke, Colonel Thornton's pen was busy making minutes of her statements; when she had concluded, he laid down the pen, and turning to her, asked,

"You believe, then, that Mr. Willcoxen committed this murder?"

"I know not—I act only upon the evidence."

"*Circumstantial* evidence, often as delusive as it is fatal! Do you think it possible that Mr. Willcoxen could have meditated such a crime?"

"No, no, no, no! *never* meditated it! if he committed it, it was unpremeditated, unintentional; the accident of some lover's quarrel, some frenzy of passion, jealousy, I know not what!"

"Let me ask you, then, why you volunteer to prosecute?"

"Because I must do so. But tell me, do you think what I have advanced trivial and unimportant?" asked Miriam, in a hopeful tone, for little she thought of herself, if only her obligation were discharged, and her brother still unharmed."

"On the contrary, I think it so important as to constrain my instant attention, and oblige me to issue a warrant for the apprehension of Mr. Thurston Willcoxen," said Colonel Thornton, as he wrote rapidly, filling out several blank documents. Then he rang a bell, that was answered by the entrance of several police officers. To the first he gave a warrant, saying, "You will serve this immediately upon Mr. Willcoxen." And to another he gave some half dozen subpœnas, saying, "You will serve all these between this time and twelve to-morrow."

When these functionaries were all discharged, Miriam arose and went to the magistrate.

"What do you think of the testimony?"

"It is more than sufficient to commit Mr. Willcoxen for trial; it may cost him his life."

A sudden paleness passed over her face; she turned to leave the office, but the hand of death seemed to clutch her heart, arresting its pulsations, stopping the current of her blood, smothering her breath, and she fell to the floor.

Wearily passed the day at Dell-Delight. Thurston, as usual, sitting reading or writing at his library table. Paul rambling uneasily about the house, now taking up a book and attempting to read, now throwing it down in disgust. Sometimes almost irresistibly impelled to spring upon his horse and gallop to Charlotte Hall—then restraining his strong impulse lest something important should transpire at home during his absence. So passed the day until the middle of the afternoon.

Paul was walking up and down the long piazza, indifferent for the first time in his life to the loveliness of the soft April atmosphere, that seemed to blend, raise and idealize the features of the landscape until earth, water and sky were harmonized into celestial beauty. Paul was growing very anxious for the reappearance of Miriam, or for some news of her or her errand, yet dreading every moment an arrival of another sort. "Where could the distracted girl be. Would her report be received and acted upon by the magistrate? if so, what would be done? how would it all end? would Thurston sleep in his own house or in a prison that night? When would Miriam return? Would she *ever* return, after having assumed such a task as she had taken upon herself."

These and other questions presented themselves every moment, as he walked up and down the piazza, keeping an eye upon the distant road.

Presently a cloud of dust in the distance arrested both his attention and his promenade, and brought his anxiety to a crisis. He soon perceived a single horseman galloping rapidly down the road, and never removed his eyes until the horseman turned into the gate and galloped swiftly up to the house.

Then with joy Paul recognized the rider, and ran eagerly down the stairs to give him welcome, and reached the paved walk just as Cloudy drew rein and threw himself from the saddle.

The meeting was a cordial, joyous one—with Cloudy, it was sincere, unmixed joy; with Paul, it was only a pleasant surprise and a transient forgetfulness. Rapid questions were asked and answered, as they hurried into the house.

Cloudy's ship had been ordered home sooner than had been expected; he had reached Norfolk a week before, B—— that afternoon, and had immediately procured a horse and hurried on home. Hence his unlooked-for arrival.

"How is Thurston? how is Miriam? How are they all at Luckenough?"

"All are well; the family at Luckenough are absent in the south, but are expected home every week."

"And where is Miriam?"

"At the village."

"And Thurston?"

"In his library, as usual," said Paul, and touched the bell to summon a messenger to send to Mr. Willcoxen.

"Have you dined, Cloudy?"

"Yes, no—I ate some bread and cheese at the village; don't fuss, I'd rather wait till supper-time."

The door opened, and Mr. Willcoxen entered.

Whatever secret anxiety might have weighed upon the minister's heart, no sign of it was suffered to appear upon his countenance, as smiling cordially, he came in holding out his hand to welcome his cousin and early playmate, expressing equal surprise and pleasure at seeing him.

Cloudy had to go over the ground of explanation of his sudden arrival, and by the time he had finished, old Jenny came in laughing and wriggling with joy to see him. But Jenny did not remain long in the parlor, she hurried out into the kitchen to express her feelings professionally by preparing a welcome feast.

"And you are not married yet, Thurston, as great a favorite as you are with the ladies? How is that? Every time I come home, I expect to be presented to a Mrs. Willcoxen, and never am gratified; why is that?"

"Perhaps I believe in the celibacy of the clergy."

"Perhaps you have never recovered the disappointment of losing Miss Le Roy?"

"Ah! Cloudy, people who live in glass houses, should not throw stones; I suspect you judge me by yourself? how is it with *you*, Cloudy? has no fair maiden been able to teach you to forget your boy-love for Jacquelina?"

Cloudy winced, but tried to cover his embarrassment with a laugh.

"Oh! I have been in love forty dozen times, I'm *always* in love; my heart is continually going through a circle from one fit to another, like the sun through the signs of the zodiac; only it never comes to anything."

"Well, at least little Jacko is forgotten, which is one congratulatory circumstance."

"No, she is *not* forgotten; I will not wrong her by saying that she is or could be! all other loves are merely the foreign ports, which my heart visits transiently now and then. Lina is its native home. I don't know how it is. With most cases of disappointment, such as yours with Miss Le Roy, I suppose the regret may be short-lived enough; but when an affection has been part and parcel of one's being from infancy up; why it is in one's soul and heart and blood, so to speak—is identical with one's consciousness, and inseparable from one's life."

"Do you ever see her?"

"See her! yes. but how? at each return from a voyage, I may see her once, with an iron grating between us; she disguised with her black shrouding robe and veil, and thinking that she must suffer here to expiate the fate of Doctor Grimshaw, who, scorpion-like, stung himself to death with the venom of his own bad passions. She is a Sister of Mercy, devoted to good works, and leaves her convent only in times of war, plague, pestilence or famine, to minister to the suffering. She nursed me through the yellow fever, when I lay in the hospital, at New Orleans, but when I got well enough to recognize her, she vanished—evaporated—made herself 'thin air,' and another sister served in her place."

"Have you ever seen her since?"

"Yes, once; I sought out her convent, and went with the fixed determination to reason with her, and to persuade her not to renew her vows for another year; you know the Sisters only take vows for a year at a time."

"Did you make any impression on her mind?" inquired Thurston, with more interest than he had yet shown in any part of the story.

"'Make any impression on her mind!' no. I—I did not even attempt to; how could I, when I only saw her behind a grate, with the prioress on one side of her, and the portress on the other? My visit was silent enough, and short enough, and *sad* enough. Why can't she come out of that? What have I done to deserve to be made miserable? I *don't* deserve it. I am the most ill-used man in the United States service."

While Cloudy spoke, old Jenny was hurrying in and out between the house and the kitchen, and busying herself with setting the table, laying the cloth, and arranging the service. But presently she came in, throwing wide the door, and announcing,

"Two gemmun, axin to see marster."

Thurston arose, and turned to front them, while Paul became suddenly pale, on recognizing two police officers.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Willcoxen—good-afternoon, gentlemen," said the foremost, and most respectable-looking of the two, lifting his hat, and bowing to the fire-side party. Then replacing it, he said: "Mr. Willcoxen, will you be kind enough to step this way, and give me your attention, sir." He walked to the window, and Thurston followed him.

Paul stood with a pale face, and firmly compressed lip, and gazed after them.

And Cloudy—unsuspicious Cloudy, arose, and stood with his back to the fire, and whistled a sea air.

"Mr. Willcoxen, you can see for yourself the import of this paper," said the officer, handing the warrant.

Thurston read it and returned it.

"Mr. Willcoxen, myself and my comrade came hither on horseback. Let me suggest to you to order your carriage. One of us will accompany you in the drive, and all remarks will be avoided."

"I thank you for the hint, Mr. Jenkins; I had, however, intended to do as you advise," said Thurston, beckoning his brother to approach.

"Paul! I am a prisoner, say nothing at present to Cloudy; permit him to assume that business takes me away, and go now quietly and order horses put to the carriage."

"Dr. Douglass, we shall want your company also," said the officer, serving Paul with a subpœna.

Paul ground his teeth together, and rushed out of the door.

"Keep an eye on that young man," said the policeman to his comrade, and the latter followed Paul into the yard, and on to the stables.

The haste and passion of Paul's manner had attracted Cloudy's attention, and now he stood looking on with surprise and inquiry.

"Cloudy," said Thurston, approaching him, "a most pressing affair demands my presence at C—— this afternoon. Paul must also attend me I may not return to-night. Paul, however, certainly will. In the meantime, Cloudy, my boy, make yourself as much at home and as happy as you possibly can."

"Oh! don't mind me! never make a stranger of me. Go by all means. I wouldn't detain you for the world; hope it is nothing of a painful nature that calls you from home, however. Any parishioner ill, dying, and wanting your ghostly consolations?"

"Oh, no," said Thurston, smiling.

"Glad of it—go by all means. I will make myself jolly until you return," said Cloudy, walking up and down the floor whistling a love ditty, and thinking of little Jacko; he always thought of her with tenfold intensity whenever he returned home, and came into her neighborhood.

"Mr. Jenkins, will you follow me to my library," said Thurston.

The officer bowed assent, and Mr. Willcoxen proceeded thither for the purpose of securing his valuable papers, and locking his secretary and writing-desk.

After an absence of some fifteen minutes, they returned to the parlor to find Paul and the constable awaiting them.

"Is the carriage ready?" asked Mr. Willcoxen.

"Yes, sir," replied the constable.

"Then, I believe, we also are—is it not so?"

The police officer bowed, and Mr. Willcoxen walked up to Cloudy and held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Cloudy, for the present. Paul will probably be home by nightfall, even if I should be detained."

"Oh, don't hurry yourself upon my account. I shall do very well. Jenny can take care of me," said Cloudy, jovially, as he shook the offered hand of Thurston

Paul could not trust himself to look Cloudy in the face and say "Good-bye." He averted his head, and so followed Mr. Willcoxen and the officer into the yard.

Mr. Willcoxen, the senior officer, and Paul Douglass, entered the carriage, and the second constable attended on horseback, and so the party set out for Charlotte Hall.

Hour after hour passed. Old Jenny came in and put the supper on the table, and stood presiding over the urn and teapot while Cloudy ate his supper. Old Jenny's tongue ran as if she felt obliged to make up in conversation for the absence of the rest of the family

"Lord knows, I'se glad 'nough you'se comed back," she said; "dis yer place is bad 'nough. Sam's been waystin' here eber since de fam'ly come from de city—dey must o' fotch him long o' dem. Now I do 'spose sumtin is happen long o' Miss Miriam, as went heyin' off to de willidge dis mornin' afore she got her brekfas, nobody on de yeth could tell what fur. Now de oder two is gone, an' nobody lef here to mine de house, 'cept 'tis you an' me! Sam's waystin'!"

Cloudy laughed and tried to cheer her spirits by a gay reply, and then they kept up between them a lively badinage of repartee, in which old Jenny acquitted herself quite as wittily as her young master.

And after supper she cleared away the service, and went to prepare a bed and light a fire in the room appropriated to Cloudy.

And so the evening wore away.

It grew late, yet neither Thurston nor Paul appeared. Cloudy began to think their return unseasonably delayed, and at eleven o'clock he took up his lamp to retire to his chamber, when he was startled and arrested by the barking of dogs, and by the rolling of the carriage into the yard, and in a few minutes the door was thrown violently open, and Paul Douglass, pale, haggard, convulsed, and despairing, burst suddenly into the room.

"Paul! Paul! what in the name of Heaven has happened?" cried Cloudy, starting up, surprised and alarmed by his appearance.

"Oh, it has ended in his committal!—it has ended in his committal!—he is fully committed for trial!—he was sent off to-night to the county jail at Leonardtown, in the custody of two officers!"

"*Who* is committed? What are you talking about, Paul?" said Cloudy, taking his hand kindly and looking in his face.

These words and actions brought Paul somewhat to his senses.

"Oh! you do not know!—you do not even guess anything about it, Cloudy! Oh, it is a terrible misfortune! Let me sit down, and I will tell you!"

And Paul Douglass threw himself into a chair, and in an agitated, nearly incoherent manner, related the circumstances that led to the arrest of Thurston Willcoxen for the murder of Marian Mayfield.

When he had concluded the strange story, Cloudy started up, took his hat, and was about to leave the room.

"Where are you going, Cloudy?"

"To the stables to saddle my horse, to ride to Leonardtown this night!"

"It is nearly twelve o'clock."

"I know it, but by hard riding I can reach Leonardtown by morning, and be with Thurston as soon as the prison-doors are opened. And I will ask you, Paul, to be kind enough to forward my trunks from the tavern at Benedict to Leonardtown, where I shall remain to be near Thurston as long as he needs my services."

"God bless you, Cloudy! I myself wished to accompany him, but he would not for a moment hear of my doing so—he entreated me to return hither to take care of poor Fanny and the homestead.

Cloudy scarcely waited to hear this benediction, but hurried to the stables, found and saddled his horse, threw himself into the stirrups, and in five minutes was dashing rapidly through the thick, low-lying forest stretching inland from the coast.

Eight hours of hard riding brought him to the county seat.

Just stopping long enough to have his horse put up at the best hotel, and to inquire his way to the prison, he hurried thither.

It was nearly nine o'clock, and the street corners were thronged with loungers conversing in low, eager tones upon the present all-absorbing topic of discourse—the astounding event of the arrest of the great preacher, the Reverend Thurston Willcoxen, upon the charge of murder.

Hurrying past all these, Cloudy reached the jail. He readily gained admittance, and was conducted to the cell of the prisoner. He found Thurston attired as when he left home, sitting at a small wooden stand, and calmly occupied with his pen.

He arose, and smilingly extended his hand, saying,

"This is very kind as well as very prompt, Cloudy. You must have ridden fast."

"I did. Leave us alone, if you please, my friend," said Cloudy, turning to the jailor.

The latter went out, and locked the door upon the friends.

"This seems a sad event to greet you on your return home, Cloudy: but never mind, it will all be well!"

"Sad? It's a *farce!* I have not an instant's misgiving about the *result;* but the present indignity! Oh! oh! I could—"

"Be calm, my dear Cloudy. Have you heard anything of the circumstances that led to this?"

"Yes! Paul told me; but he is as crazy and incoherent as a Bedlamite! I want you, if you please, Thurston, if you have no objection, to go over the whole story for me, that I may see if I can make anything of it, for your defence."

"Poor Paul! he takes this matter far too deeply to heart: sit down. I have not a second chair to offer, but take this or the foot of the cot, as you prefer."

Cloudy took the foot of the cot.

"Certainly, Cloudy, I will tell you everything," said Thurston, and forthwith commenced his explanation.

Thurston's narrative was clear and to the point. When it was finished, Cloudy asked a number of questions, chiefly referring to the day of the tragedy. When these were answered, he sat with his brows gathered down in astute thought. Presently he asked,

"Thurston, have you engaged counsel?"

"Yes; Mr. Romford has been with me this morning."

"Is he fully competent?"

"The best lawyer in the state."

"When does the court sit?"

"On Monday week."

"Have you any idea whether your trial will come on early in the session?"

"I presume it will come on very soon, as Mr. Romford informs me there are but few cases on the docket."

"Thank Heaven for that, as your confinement here promises to be of very short duration. However, the limited time makes it the more necessary for me to act with the greater promptitude. I came here with the full intention of remaining in town as long as you should be detained in this infernal place, but I shall have to leave you within the hour."

"Of course, Cloudy, my dear boy, I could not expect you to restrict yourself to this town so soon after escaping from the confinement of your ship!"

"Oh! you don't understand me at all! Do you think I am going away on my *own* business, or amusement, while *you* are here? To the devil with the thought—begging your reverence's pardon. No, I am going in search of Jacquelina. Since hearing your explanation, particularly that part of it relating to your visit to Luckenough, upon the morning of the day of Marian's death, and the various scenes that occurred there—certain vague ideas of my own have taken form and color—and I feel convinced that Jacquelina could throw some light upon this affair."

"Indeed! why should you think so?"

"Oh! from many small indexes, which I have neither the time nor the inclination to tell you; for taken apart from collateral circumstances and associations, they would appear visionary. Each in itself is really trivial enough, but in the mass they are very indicative. At least I think so, and I must seek Jacquelina out immediately. And to do so, Thurston, I must leave you this moment, for there is a boat to leave the wharf for Baltimore this morning, if it has not already gone. It will take me two days to reach Baltimore, another day to get to her convent, and it will altogether be five or six days before I can get back here. Good-bye, Thurston, Heaven keep you, and give you a speedy deliverance from this black hole!"

And Cloudy threw his arms around Thurston in a brotherly embrace, and then knocked at the door to be let out.

In half-an-hour, Cloudy was "once more upon the waters," in full sail for Baltimore.

CHAPTER XLIV.

MARIAN.

"Rise! for the day is breaking,
Though the dull night be long;
Rise! God is not forsaking
Thy heart—be strong! be strong!

Rise! for the time is hasting
When life shall be made clear
And all who know heart-wasting,
Shall feel that God is dear!"—*C. H. T.*

Great was the consternation caused by the arrest of a gentleman so high in social rank and scholastic and theological reputation, as the Reverend Thurston Willcoxen, and upon a charge, too, so awful as that for which he stood committed! It was the one all-absorbing subject of thought and conversation. People neglected their business, forgetting to work, to bargain, buy or sell. Village shop-keepers, instead of vamping their wares, leaned eagerly over their counters, and with great dilated eyes and dogmatical fore-fingers, discussed with customers the merits or demerits of the great case. Village mechanics, occupied solely with the subject of the pastor's guilt or innocence, disappointed with impunity customers who were themselves too deeply interested and too highly excited by the same subject, to remember, far less to rebuke them, for unfulfilled engagements. Even women totally neglected, or badly fulfilled, their domestic avocations; for who in the parish could sit down quietly to the construction of a garment or a pudding while their beloved pastor, the "all praised" Thurston Willcoxen, lay in prison awaiting his trial for a capital crime?

As usual in such cases, there was very little cool reasoning, and very much passionate declamation. The first astonishment had given place to conjecture, which yielded in turn to dogmatic judgments—acquiescing or condemning, as the self-constituted judges happened to be favorable or adverse to the cause of the minister.

In a word, those who are familiar with the circumstances attending a Boston tragedy, that electrified the country some few years ago, can readily imagine the social convulsion that ensued upon the arrest of a clergyman so justly celebrated, so honored and beloved, upon a charge so horrible and loathly.

When the first Sabbath after the arrest came, and the church was closed because the pulpit was unoccupied, the dispersed congregation, haunted by the vision of the absent pastor in his cell, discussed the matter anew, and differed and disputed, and fell out worse than ever—parties formed for and against the minister, and party feuds raged high.

Upon the second Sabbath—being the day before the county court should sit—a substitute filled the pulpit of Mr. Willcoxen, and his congregation re-assembled to hear an edifying discourse from the text—"I myself have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like a green bay tree. I went by, and lo! he was gone; I sought him, but his place was nowhere to be found."

This sermon bore rather hard (by pointed allusions) upon the great elevation and sudden downfall of the celebrated minister, and, in consequence, delighted one portion of the audience and enraged the other. The last-mentioned charged the new preacher with envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness, besides the wish to rise on the ruin of his unfortunate predecessor, and they went home in high indignation, resolved not to set foot within the parish church again until the honorable acquittal of their own beloved pastor should put all his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers to shame.

The excitement spread, and gained force and fire with space. The press took it up, and went to war as the people had done. And as far as the name of Thurston Willcoxen had been wafted by the breath of fame, it was now blown by the "Blatant

Beast." Aye, and farther too! for those who had never even heard of his great talents, his learning, his eloquence, his zeal and his charity, were made familiar with his imputed crime and shuddered while they denounced. And this was natural and well, so far as it went to prove that great excellence is so much less rare than great evil, as to excite less attention. The news of this signal event spread like wildfire all over the country, from Maine to Louisiana, and from Missouri to Florida, producing everywhere great excitement, but falling in *three* places with the crushing force of a thunderbolt.

First by Marian's fireside.

In a private parlor of a quiet hotel, in one of the eastern cities, sat the lady, now nearly thirty years of age, yet still in the bloom of her womanly beauty.

She had lately arrived from Europe, charged with one of those benevolent missions which it was the business and the consolation of her life to fulfill.

It was late in the afternoon, and the low descending sun threw its golden gleam across the round table at which she sat, busily engaged with reading reports, making notes, and writing letters connected with the affair upon which she had come.

Seven years had not changed Marian much—a little less vivid, perhaps, the bloom on cheeks and lips, a shade paler the angel brow, a shade darker the rich and lustrous auburn tresses, softer and calmer, fuller of thought and love the clear blue eyes—sweeter her tones, and gentler all her motions—that was all. Her dress was insignificant, in material, make and color, yet the wearer unconsciously imparted a classic and regal grace to every fold and fall of the drapery. No splendor of apparel could have given such effect to her individual beauty as this quiet costume; I would I were an artist, that I might reproduce her image as she was—the glorious face and head, the queenly form, in its plain but graceful robe of I know not what—gray serge, perhaps.

Her whole presence—her countenance, manner and tone revealed the richness, strength and serenity of a faithful, loving, self-denying, God-reliant soul—of one who could recall the past, endure the present, and anticipate the future without regret, complaint or fear.

Sometimes the lady's soft eyes would lift themselves from her work, to rest with tenderness upon the form of a little child, so small and still that you would not have noticed her presence, but in following the lady's loving glance. She sat in a tiny rocking chair, nursing a little white rabbit on her lap. She was not a beautiful child—she was too diminutive and pale, with hazy blue eyes, and fady yellow hair—yet her little face was so demure and sweet, so meek and loving, that it would haunt and soften you more than that of a beautiful child could. The child had been orphaned from her birth, and when but a few days old, had been received into the "Children's Home."

Marian never had a favorite among her children, but this little waif was so completely orphaned, so desolate and destitute, and withal so puny, fragile, and lifeless, that Marian took her to her own heart day and night, imparting from her own fine vital temperament the warmth and vigor that nourished the perishing little human blossom to life and health. If ever a mother's heart lived in a maiden's bosom, it was in Marian's. As she had cherished Miriam, she now cherished Angel, and she was as fondly loved by the one as she had been by the other. And so for five years past Angel had been Marian's inseparable companion. She sat with her little lesson, or her sewing, or her pet rabbit, at Marian's feet while she worked—held her hand when she walked out, sat by her side at the table or in the carriage, and slept nestled in her arms at night. She was the one earthly blossom that bloomed in Marian's solitary path.

Angel now sat with her rabbit on her knees, waiting demurely till Marian should have time to notice her.

And the lady still worked on, stopping once in a while to smile upon the child. There was a file of the evening papers lying near at hand upon the table where she wrote, but Marian had not yet had time to look at them. Soon, however, she had occasion to refer to one of them for the names of the members of the Committee on Public Lands. In casting her eyes over the paper, her glance suddenly lighted upon a paragraph that sent all the blood from her cheeks to her heart. She dropped the paper, sank back in her chair, and covered her blanched face with both hands, and strove for self-control.

Angel softly put down the rabbit, and gently stole to her side and looked up with her little face full of wondering sympathy.

Presently Marian began passing her hands slowly over her forehead, with a sort of unconscious self-mesmerism, and then she dropped them wearily upon her lap, and Angel saw how pallid was her face, how ashen and tremulous her lip, how quivering her hands. But after a few seconds, Marian stooped and picked the paper up, and read the long, wonder-mongering affair, in which all that had *been*, and all that had *seemed*, as well as many things that could neither *be* nor *seem*, was related at length, or conjectured, or suggested. It began by announcing the arrest of the Reverend Thurston Willcoxen upon the charge of murder, and then went back to the beginning, and related the whole story, from the first disappearance of Marian Mayfield, to the late discoveries that had led to the apprehension of the supposed murderer, with many additions and improvements gathered in the rolling of the ball of falsehood. Among the rest, that the body of the unhappy young lady had been washed ashore several miles below the scene of her dreadful fate, and had been charitably interred by some poor fishermen. The article concluded by describing the calm demeanor of the accused and the contemptuous manner in which he treated a charge so grave, scorning even to deny it.

"Oh, I do not wonder at the horror and consternation this matter has caused. When the deed was attempted, more than the intended *death wound* did it overcome me! And nothing, *nothing* in the universe but the evidence of my own senses could have convinced me of his purposed guilt! And still I cannot *realize* it! He *must* have been insane! But he treats the discovery of his intended and supposed crime with scorn and contempt! Alas! alas! is this the end of years of suffering and probation? Is this the fruit of that long remorse, from which I had hoped so much for his redemption? A remorse without repentance, and barren of reformation! Yet I must save him!"

She arose and rung the bell, and gave orders to have two seats secured for her in the coach that would leave in the morning for Baltimore. And then she began to walk up and down the floor, to try and walk off the excitement that was fast gaining upon her.

Before this night and this discovery, not for the world would Marian have made her existence known to him, far less would she have sought his presence. Nay, deeming such a meeting improper as it was impossible, her mind had never contemplated it for an instant. She had watched his course, sent anonymous donations to his charities, hoped much from his repentance and good works, but never hoped in any regard to *herself.* But *now* it was absolutely necessary that she should make her existence known to him. She would go to him! She must save him! She should see him, and speak to him—him whom she had never hoped to meet again in life! She would see him again in three days! The thought was too exciting even for her strong heart and frame, and calm self-governing nature! And in defiance of reason and of will, her long-buried youthful love, her pure, earnest, single-hearted love, burst its secret sepulchre, and rejoiced through all her nature. The *darkness* of the past was, for the time, forgotten. Memory recalled no picture of unkindness, injustice, or inconstancy. Even the scene upon the beach was faded, gone, lost. But the *light* of the past glowed around her—their seaside strolls and woodland wanderings—

"The still, green places where they met,
The moonlit branches dewy wet,
The greeting and the parting word,
The smile, the embrace, the tone that made
An Eden of the forest shade."

kindling a pure rapture from memory, and a wild longing from hope, that her full heart could scarce contain.

But soon came on another current of thought and feeling opposed to the first—doubt and fear of the meeting. For herself she felt that she could forget all the sorrows of the past, aye! and with fervent glowing soul, and flushed cheeks, and tearful eyes, and clasped hands, she adored the Father in Heaven that He had put no limit to forgiveness—no! in that blessed path of light all space was open to the human will, and the heart might forgive infinitely—and to its own measureless extent!

But how would Thurston meet her? He had suffered such tortures from remorse, that doubtless he would rejoice "with exceeding great joy" to find that the deed attempted in some fit of madness, had really not been effected. But his sufferings had sprung from remorse of *conscience*, not from remorse of *love*. No! except as his deliverer, he would probably not be pleased to see her. As soon as this thought had seized her mind, then indeed all the bitterer scenes in the past started up to life, and broke down the defences reared by love, and faith, and hope, and let in the tide of anguish and despair that rolled over her soul, shaking it as it had not been shaken for many years. And her head fell upon her bosom, and her hands were clasped convulsively, as she walked up and down the floor—striving with herself—striving to subdue the rebel passions of her heart—striving to attain her wonted calmness, and strength, and self-possession, and at last praying earnestly—"Oh, Father! the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon my soul; let not its strength fall as if built upon the sand." And so she walked up and down, striving and praying; nor was the struggle in vain—once more she "conquered a peace" in her own bosom.

She turned her eyes upon little Angel. The infant was drooping over one arm of her rocking-chair, like a fading lily, but her soft hazy eyes, full of vague sympathy, followed the lady wherever she went.

Marian's heart smote her for her temporary forgetfulness of the child's wants. It was now twilight, and Marian rang for lights, and Angel's milk and bread, which were soon brought.

And then with her usual quiet tenderness, she undressed the little one, heard her prayers, took her up, and as she rocked, sang a sweet low evening hymn, that soothed the child to sleep, and her own heart to perfect rest. And early the next morning, Marian and little Angel set out by the first coach for Baltimore, on their way to St. Mary's county.

The Convent of Bethlehem was not only the sanctuary of professed nuns, the school of girls, the nursery of orphans, but it was also the temporary home of those Sisters of Mercy, who go forth into the world only on errands of Christian love and charity, and return to their convent often only to die, worn out by toil among scenes and sufferers near which few but themselves would venture. And as they pass hence to Heaven, their ranks are still filled up from the world—not always by the weary and disappointed. Often young Catholic girls voluntarily leave the untried world that is smiling fair before them to enter upon a life of poverty, self-denial, and merciful ministrations; so even in this century the order of the Sisters of Mercy is kept up.

Among the most active and zealous of the order of Bethlehem was the Sister Theresa, the youngest of the band. Youthful as she was, however, this sister's heart was no sweet sacrifice of "a flower offered in the bud—" on the contrary I am afraid that Sister Theresa had trifled with, and pinched, and bruised, and trampled the poor budding heart, until she thought it good for nothing upon earth, before she offered it to heaven. I fear it was nothing higher than that strange revulsion of feeling, world weariness, disappointment, disgust, remorse, fanaticism—either, any, or all of these, call it what you will, that in past ages and Catholic countries have filled monasteries with the whilome gay, worldly and ambitious; that has sent many a woman in the prime of her beauty, and many a man at the acme of his power, into a convent; that transformed the mighty Emperor Charles V. into a cowled and shrouded monk; the reckless swash-bucklar, Ignatius Loyola, into a holy saint, and the beautiful Louise de la Valliere into an ascetic nun; which finally metamorphosed the gayest, maddest, merriest elf that ever danced into the moonlight, into—Sister Theresa.

Poor Jacquelina! for, of course, you can have no doubt that it is of *her* we are speaking—she perpetrated her last lugubrious joke on the day that she was to have made her vows, for when asked what patron saint she would select by taking that saint's name in religion, she answered—St. Theresa, because St. Theresa would understand her case the best, having been, like herself, a scamp and a rattle-brain before she took it into her head to astonish her friends by becoming a saint. Poor Jacko said this with the solemnest face and the most serious earnestness, but with such a reputation as she had had for pertness, of course nobody would believe but that she was making fun of the "Blessed Theresa," and so she was put upon farther probation, with the injunction to say the seven penitential psalms seven times a day, until she was in a holier frame of mind; which she did, though under protest, that she didn't think the words composed by David, to express his remorse for his own enormous sin, exactly suited her case. Sister Theresa, if the least steady and devout, was certainly the most active and zealous and courageous among them all. She yawned horribly over the long litanies and longer sermons; but if ever there was a work of mercy requiring extraordinary labor, privation, exposure and danger, Sister Theresa was the one to face in the cause lightning and tempest; plague, pestilence, and famine; battle, and murder, and sudden death! Happy was she? or content? No—she was moody, hysterical, and devotional by turns—sometimes a zeal for good works would possess her; sometimes the old fun and quaintness would break out; and sometimes an overwhelming fit of remorse;—each depending upon the accidental cause that would chance to arouse the moods.

Humane creatures are like climates—some of a temperate atmosphere, take even life-long sorrow serenely—never forgetting, and never exaggerating its cause—never very wretched, if never quite happy. Others of a more torrid nature, have long sunny seasons of bird-like cheerfulness and happy forgetfulness, until some slight cause, striking "the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound," shall startle up memory—and grief, intensely realized, shall rise to anguish, and a storm shall pass through the soul, shaking it almost to dissolution, and the poor subject thinks, if she *can* think, that her heart must go to pieces this time! But the storm passes, and nature, instead of being destroyed, is refreshed and ready for the sunshine and the song-birds again. The elastic heart throws off its weight, the spirits revive, and life goes on joyously in harmony with nature.

So it was with Jacquelina, with this sad difference, that as her trouble was *more* than sorrow—as it was *remorse*—it was never quite thrown off. It was not that her conscience reproached her for the fate of Dr. Grimshaw, which was brought on by his own wrong doing—but Marian—that a wild, wanton frolic of her own should have caused the early death of one so young, and beautiful, and good as Marian! *that* was the thought that nearly drove poor Jacquelina mad with remorse, whenever she realized it. Dr. Grimshaw was forgiven, and—forgotten; but the thought of Marian was the "undying worm," that preyed upon her heart. And so, year after year, despite the arguments and persuasions of nearest friends, and the constancy of poor Cloudy, Jacquelina tearfully turned from love, friendship, wealth and ease, and renewed her vows of poverty, celibacy, obedience, and the service of the poor, sick and ignorant, in the hope of expiating her offence, soothing the voice of conscience, and gaining peace. Jacquelina would have made her vows perpetual, by taking the black veil, but her Superior constantly dissuaded her from it—she was young, and life, with its possibilities, was all before her; she must wait many years before she took the step that could not be retracted without perjury. And so each year she renewed her vow a twelvemonth. The seventh year of her religious life was drawing to its close, and she had notified her superior of her wish *now*, after so many years of probation, to take the black veil, and make her vows perpetual. And the Abbess had, at length, listened favorably to her expressed wishes.

But a few days after this, as the good old Mother, Martha, the portress, sat dozing over her rosary, behind the hall grating —the outer door was thrown open, and a young man, in a midshipman's undress uniform, entered rather brusquely, and came up to the grating. Touching his hat precisely as if the old lady had been his superior officer, he said hastily,

"Madame, if you please, I wish to see Mrs. ———; you know who I mean, I presume? my cousin, Jacquelina."

The portress knew well enough, for she had seen Cloudy there several times before, but she replied,

"You mean, young gentleman, that pious daughter, called in the world Mrs. Grimshaw, but in religion Sister Theresa?"

"Fal lal!—that is—I beg your pardon, Mother, but I wish to see the lady immediately; can I do so?

"The dear sister Theresa is at present making her retreat, preparatory to taking the black veil."

"The what!" exclaimed Cloudy, with as much horror as if it had been the '*black dose*' she was going to take.

"The black veil—and so she cannot be seen."

"Madam I have a very pressing form of invitation here, which people are not very apt to disregard. Did you ever hear of a subpœna, dear Mother?"

The good woman never *had*, but she thought it evidently something "uncanny," for she said—"I will send for the Abbess;" and she beckoned to a nun within, and sent her on the errand—and soon the Abbess appeared, and Cloudy made known the object of his visit.

"Go into the parlor, sir, and Sister Theresa will attend you," said that lady.

And Cloudy turned to a side door on his right hand, and went into the little receiving room, three sides of which were like other rooms, but the fourth side was a grating instead of a wall. Behind this grating appeared Jacquelina—so white and thin with confinement, fasting, and vigil, and so disguised by her nun's dress, as to be unrecognizable to any but a lover's eyes: with her was the Abbess.

Cloudy went up to the grating—Jacquelina put her hand through, and spoke a kind greeting; but Cloudy glanced at the Abbess, looked reproachfully at Jacquelina, and then turning to the former said,—

"Madam, I wish to say a few words in confidence, to my cousin here. Can I be permitted to do so?"

"Most certainly, young gentleman; Sister Theresa is not restricted. It was at her own request that I attended her hither."

"Thank you, dear lady—that which I have to say to—*Sister Theresa*—involves the confidence of others: else, I should not have made the request that you have so kindly granted," said Cloudy, considerably mollified.

The Abbess curtsied in the old stately way, and retired.

Cloudy looked at Jacquelina reproachfully.

"Are you going to be a nun, Lina?"

"Yes. Oh! Cloudy, Cloudy, what do you come here to disturb my thoughts so for! Oh! Cloudy! every time you come to see me, you do so upset and confuse my mind! You have no idea how many aves and paters, and psalms and litanies I have to say before I can quiet my mind down again! And now this is worse than all. Dear, *dear* Cloudy!—St. Mary, forgive me, I never meant that—I meant plain Cloudy—see how you make me sin in words! What did you send Mother Ettienne away for?"

"That I might talk to you alone. Why do you deny me that small consolation, Lina? How have I offended, that you should treat me so?"

"In no way at all have you offended, *dearest* Cloudy—St. Peter! there it is again—I mean only Cloudy."

"Never mind explaining the distinction. You are going to be a *nun*, you say! Very well—let that pass, too! But you must leave your convent, and go into the world yet once more, and then I shall have opportunities of talking to you before your return."

"No, no; never will I leave my convent—never will I subject my soul to such a temptation."

"My dear Lina, I have the cabalistic words that must draw you forth—listen! Our cousin, Thurston Willcoxen, is in prison, charged with the murder of Marian Mayfield"—a stifled shriek from Jacquelina—"and there is circumstantial evidence against him strong enough to ruin him forever, if it does not cost him his life. Now, Lina, I cannot be wrong in supposing that *you* know who struck that death-blow, and that *your* evidence can thoroughly exonerate Thurston from suspicion! Am I right?"

"Yes! yes! you are right," exclaimed Jacquelina, in great agitation.

"You will go, then?"

"Yes! yes."

"When?"

"In an hour—this moment—with you."

"With me?"

"Yes! I may do so in such a case. I *must* do so! Oh! Heaven knows, I have occasioned sin enough, without causing more against poor Thurston!"

"You will get ready then immediately, dear Lina. Are you sure there will be no opposition?"

"Certainly not. Why, Cloudy, are you one of those who credit 'raw head and bloody bones' fables about convents? I have no jailor but my own conscience, Cloudy. Besides, my year's vows expired yesterday, and I am free for awhile, before renewing them perpetually," said Jacquelina, hurrying away to get ready.

"And may I be swung to the yard-arm if ever I let you renew them," said Cloudy, while he waited for her.

Jacquelina was soon ready—and Cloudy rejoined her in the front entry—behind the grating of which the good old portress, as she watched the handsome middy drive off with her young postulant, devoutly crossed herself, and diligently told her beads

Commodore Waugh and his family were returning slowly from the South, stopping at all the principal towns for long rests on their way homeward.

The Commodore was now a wretched, helpless old man, depending almost for his daily life, upon the care and tenderness of Mrs. Waugh.

Good Henrietta, with advancing years, had continued to "wax fat," and now it was about as much as she could do, with many grunts, to get up and down stairs. Since her double bereavement of her "Hebe" and her "Lapwing," her kind, motherly countenance had lost somewhat of its comfortable jollity, and her hearty mellow laugh was seldom heard. Still good Henrietta was passably happy, as the world goes, for she had the lucky foundation of a happy temper and temperament—she enjoyed the world, her friends and her creature comforts—her sound, innocent sleep—her ambling pony, or her easy carriage—her hearty meals and her dreamy doze in the soft arm-chair of an afternoon, while Mrs. L'Oiseau droned, in a dreary voice, long homilies for the good of the Commodore's soul.

Mrs. L'Oiseau had got to be one of the saddest and maddest fanatics that ever afflicted a family. And there were hours when, by holding up too graphic, terrific, and exasperating pictures of the veteran's past and present wickedness and impenitence, and his future retribution, in the shape of an external roasting in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone—she drove the old man half frantic with rage and fright! And then she would nearly finish him by asking—If hell was so horrible to *hear* of for a little while, what must it be to *feel* forever and ever?

They had reached Charleston, on their way home. Mrs L'Oiseau, too much fatigued to persecute her uncle for his good, had gone to her chamber.

The Commodore was put comfortably to bed.

And Mrs. Waugh took the day's paper, and sat down by the old man's side, to read him the news until he should get sleepy. As she turned the paper about, her eyes fell upon the same paragraph that had so agitated Marian. Now, Henrietta was by no means excitable—on the contrary, she was rather hard to be moved; but on seeing this announcement of the arrest of Mr. Willcoxen, for the crime with which he was charged, an exclamation of horror and amazement burst from her lips. In another moment she had controlled herself, and would gladly have kept the exciting news from the sick man until the morning.

But it was too late—the Commodore had heard the unwonted cry, and now, raised upon his elbow, lay staring at her with his great fat eyes, and insisting upon knowing—What the foul fiend she meant by screeching out in that manner?

It was in vain to evade the question—the Commodore would hear the news. And Mrs. Waugh told him.

"And by the bones of Paul Jones, I always believed it!" falsely swore the Commodore; and thereupon he demanded to hear "all about it."

Mrs. Waugh commenced, and in a very unsteady voice read the long account quite through. The Commodore made no comment, except an occasional grunt of satisfaction, until she had finished it, when he growled out,

"Knew it!—hope they'll hang him!—d—d rascal! If it hadn't been for him, there'd been no trouble in the family! now call Festus to help to turn me over, and tuck me up, Henrietta; I want to go to sleep!"

That night Mrs. Waugh said nothing, but the next morning she proposed hurrying homeward with all possible speed.

But the Commodore would hear of no such thing. He swore roundly that he would not stir to save the necks of all the scoundrels in the world, much less that of Thurston, who, if he did not kill Marian, deserved richly to be hanged for giving poor Nace so much trouble.

Mrs. Waugh coaxed and argued in vain. The Commodore rather liked to hear her do so, and so the longer she pleaded, the more obstinate and dogged he grew, until at last Henrietta desisted—telling him, Very well!—justice and humanity alike required *her* presence near the unhappy man, and so, whether the Commodore chose to budge or not, *she* should surely leave Charleston in that very evening's boat for Baltimore, so as to reach Leonardtown in time for the trial. Upon hearing this, the Commodore swore furiously; but knowing of old that nothing could turn Henrietta from the path of duty, and dreading above all things to lose her comfortable attentions, and be left to the doubtful mercies of Mary L'Oiseau, he yielded, though with the worst possible grace, swearing all the time that he hoped the villain would swing for it yet.

And then the trunks were packed, and the travellers resumed their homeward journey.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE TRIAL.

"Through night to day!
When sullen darkness lowers,
And heaven and earth are hid from sight,
Cheer up! cheer up!
Ere long the opening flowers,
With dewy eyes, shall shine in light,

Through storm to calm!
When over land and ocean
Roll the loud chariots of the wind,
Cheer up! Cheer up!
The voice of wild commotion
Proclaims tranquility at hand."—*Montgomery.*

The day of the trial came. It was a bright spring day, and from an early hour in the morning the village was crowded to overflowing with people collected from all parts of the county.

The court-room was filled to suffocation. It was with the greatest difficulty that order could be maintained when the prisoner, in the custody of the high sheriff, was brought into court.

The venerable presiding judge was supposed to be unfriendly to the accused, and the state's attorney was known to be personally, as well as officially, hostile to his interests. So strongly were the minds of the people prejudiced, upon one side or the other, that it was with much trouble twelve men could be found who had not made up their opinions as to the prisoner's innocence or guilt. At length, however, a jury was empaneled, and the trial commenced. When the prisoner was placed at the bar, and asked the usual question, "Guilty or Not Guilty?" some of the old haughtiness curled the lip and flashed from the eye of Thurston Willcoxen, as though he disdained to answer a charge so base; and he replied in a low, scornful tone,

"Not Guilty, your honor."

The opening charge of the state's attorney had been carefully prepared. Mr. Thomson had never in his life had so important a case upon his hands, and he was resolved to make the most of it. His speech was well reasoned, logical, eloquent. To destroy in the minds of the jury every favorable impression left by the late blameless and beneficent life of Mr. Willcoxen, he did not fail to adduce, from olden history, and from later times, every signal instance of depravity, cloaked with hypocrisy, in high places; he enlarged upon wolves in sheep's clothing—Satan in an angel's garb, and dolefully pointed out how many times the indignant question of—"Is thy servant a *dog*, that he should do this thing?"—had been answered by results in the affirmative. He raked up David's sin from the ashes of ages. Where was the scene of that crime, and who was its perpetrator—in the court of Israel, by the King of Israel—a man after God's own heart. Could the gentlemen of the jury be surprised at the appalling discovery so recently made, as if great crimes in high places were impossible or new things under the sun? He did not fail to draw a touching picture of the victim;

the beautiful young stranger-girl, whom they all remembered and loved—who had come, an angel of mercy, on a mission of mercy, to their shores. Was not her beauty, her genius, her *goodness*, by which all there had at some time been blessed—sufficient to save her from the knife of the assassin?—No! as he should shortly prove. Yet all these years her innocent blood had cried to Heaven in vain; her fate was unavenged, her manes unappeased.

All the women, and all the simple-hearted and unworldly among the men, were melted into tears, very unpropitious to the fate of Thurston; tears not called up by the eloquence of the prosecuting attorney, so much as by the mere allusion to the fate of Marian, once so beloved, and still so fresh in the memories of all.

Thurston heard all this—not in the second-hand style with which I have summed it up—but in the first vital freshness, when it was spoken with a logic, force, and fire, that carried conviction to many a mind. Thurston looked upon the judge—his face was stern and grave. He looked upon the jury—they were all strangers, from distant parts of the county, drawn by idle curiosity to the scene of trial, and arriving quite unprejudiced. They were *not* his "peers," but, on the contrary, twelve as stolid-looking brothers as ever decided the fate of a gentleman and scholar. Thence he cast his eyes over the crowd in the court-room.

There were his parishioners! hoary patriarchs and gray-haired matrons, stately men and lovely women, who, from week to week, for many years, had still hung delighted on his discourses, as though his lips had been touched with fire, and all his words inspired! There they were around him again! But oh! how different the relations and the circumstances! There they sat, with stern brows and averted faces, or downcast eyes, and "lips that scarce their scorn forbore." No eye or lip among them responded kindly to his searching gaze—and Thurston turned his face away again—for an instant his soul sank under the pall of despair that fell darkening upon it. It was not conviction in the *court* he thought of—he would probably be acquitted by the court—but what should acquit him in public opinion? The evidence that might not be strong enough to doom him to death, would still be sufficient to destroy forever his position and his usefulness. No eye thenceforth would meet his own in friendly confidence. No hand grasp his in brotherly fellowship.

The state's attorney was still proceeding with his speech. He was now stating the case, which he promised to prove by competent witnesses—how the prisoner at the bar had long pursued his beautiful but hapless victim—how he had been united to her by a private marriage—that he had corresponded with her from Europe—that upon his return they had frequently met—that the prisoner, with the treachery that would soon be proved to be a part of his nature, had grown weary of his wife, and transferred his attentions to another and more fortune-favored lady—and finally, that upon the evening of the murder he had decoyed the unhappy young lady to the fatal spot, and then and there effected his purpose. The prosecuting attorney made this statement, not with the brevity with which it is here reported, but with a minuteness of detail and warmth of coloring that harrowed up the hearts of all who heard it. He finished by saying that he should call the witnesses in the order of time corresponding with the facts they came to prove.

"Oliver Murray will take the stand."

This, the first witness called, after the usual oath, deposed that he had first seen the prisoner and the deceased together in the Library of Congress; had overheard their conversation, and suspecting some unfairness on the part of the prisoner, had followed the parties to the navy-yard, where he had witnessed their marriage ceremony.

"When was the next occasion upon which you saw the prisoner?"

"On the night of the 8th of April, 182–, on the coast, near Pine Bluff. I had landed from a boat, and was going inland when I passed him. I did not see his face distinctly, but recognized him by his size and form, and peculiar air and gait. He was hurrying away, with every mark of terror and agitation."

This portion of Mr. Murray's testimony was so new to all, as to excite the greatest degree of surprise, and in no bosom did it arouse more astonishment than in that of Thurston. The witness was strictly cross-questioned by the counsel for the prisoner, but the cross-examination failed to weaken his testimony, or to elicit anything more favorable to the accused. Oliver Murray was then directed to stand aside.

The next witness was Miriam Shields. Deeply veiled and half fainting, the poor girl was led in between Colonel and Miss Thornton, and allowed to sit while giving evidence. When told to look at the prisoner at the bar, she raised her deathlike face, and a deep, gasping sob broke from her bosom. But Thurston fixed his eyes kindly and encouragingly upon her—his look said plainly—"Fear nothing, dear Miriam! Be courageous! do your stern duty, and trust in God."

Miriam then identified the prisoner as the man she had twice seen alone with Marian at night. She farther testified, that upon the night of April 8th, 182–, Marian had left home late in the evening to keep an appointment—from which she had never returned. That in the pocket of the dress she had laid off, was found the note appointing the meeting upon the beach for the night in question. Here the note was produced Miriam identified the handwriting as that of Mr. Willcoxen.

Paul Douglass was next called to the stand, and required to give his testimony in regard to the handwriting. Paul looked at the piece of paper that was placed before him, and he was sorely tempted. How could *he* swear to the handwriting unless he had actually *seen the hand write it?* he asked himself. He looked at his brother. But Thurston saw the struggle in his mind, and his countenance was stern and high, and his look authoritative and commanding—it said—"Paul! do not dare to deceive yourself. You know the handwriting. Speak the truth if it kill me." And Paul did so.

The next witness that took the stand was Dr. Brightwell—

the good old physician gave his evidence very reluctantly—it went to prove the fact of the prisoner's absence from the death-bed of his grandfather upon the night of the reputed murder, and his distracted appearance when returning late in the morning.

"Why do you say *reputed* murder?"

"Because, sir, I never consider the fact of a murder established, until the body of the victim has been found."

"You may stand down."

Dr. Solomon Weismann was next called to the stand, and corroborated the testimony of the last witness.

Several other witnesses were then called in succession, whose testimony being only corroborative, was not very important. And the prisoner was remanded, and the court adjourned until ten o'clock the next morning.

"Life will be saved, but position and usefulness in this neighborhood gone forever, Paul," said Thurston, as they went out.

"Evidence very strong—very conclusive to our minds, yet not sufficient to convict him," said one gentleman to another.

"I am of honest Dr. Brightwell's opinion—that the establishment of a murder needs as a starting point the finding of the body; and moreover, that the conviction of a murderer requires an eye-witness to the deed. The evidence, so far as we have heard it, is strong enough to ruin the man, but not strong enough to hang him," said a third.

"Aye! but we have not heard all, or the most important part of the testimony. The state's attorney has not fired his great gun yet," said a fourth, as the crowd elbowed, pushed, and struggled out of the court-room.

Those from distant parts of the county remained in the village all night—those nearer returned home to come back in the morning.

The second day of the trial, the village was more crowded than before. At ten o'clock the court opened, the prisoner was shortly afterwards brought in, and the prosecution renewed its examination of witnesses. The next witness that took the stand was a most important one. John Miles, captain of the schooner Plover. He deposed that in the month of April, 182–, he was mate in the schooner Blanch, of which his father was the captain. That in said month the prisoner at the bar had hired his father's vessel to carry off a lady whom the prisoner declared to be his own wife; that they were to take her to the Bermudas. That to effect their object, his father and himself had landed near Pine Bluff; the night was dark, yet he soon discerned the lady walking alone upon the beach. They were bound to wait for the arrival of the prisoner, and a signal from him, before approaching the lady. They waited some time, watching from their cover the lady as she paced impatiently up and down the sands. At length they saw the prisoner approaching. He was closely wrapped up in his cloak, and his hat was pulled over his eyes, but they recognized him well by his air and gait. They drew nearer still, keeping in the shadow, waiting for the signal. The lady and the prisoner met—a few words passed between them—of which he, the deponent, only heard "Thurston?" "Yes, *Thurston!*" and then the prisoner raised his arm and struck, and the lady fell. His father was a cautious man, and when he saw the prisoner rush up the cliff and disappear, that the lady was dead, and that the storm was beginning to rage violently and the tide was coming in, and fearing, besides, that he should get into trouble, he hurried into the boat and put off and boarded the schooner, and as soon as possible set sail for Bermuda. They had kept away from this coast for years, that is to say, as long as the father lived.

John Miles was cross-examined by Mr. Romford, but without effect.

This testimony bore fatally upon the prisoner's cause—the silence of consternation reigned through the crowd.

Thurston Willcoxen, when he heard this astounding evidence, first thought that the witness was perjured, but when he looked closely upon his open, honest face, and fearless eye and free bearing, he saw that no consciousness of falsehood was there and he could but grant that the witness, naturally deceived by "foregone conclusions," had inevitably mistaken the real murderer for himself.

Darker and darker lowered the pall of fate over him—the awful stillness of the court was oppressive, was suffocating; a deathly faintness came upon him, for now, for the first time, he fully realized the awful doom that threatened him. Not long his nature bowed under the burden—his spirit rose to throw it off, and once more the fine head was proudly raised, nor did it once sink again. The last witness for the prosecution was now called and took the stand, and deposed that he lived ten miles down the coast in an isolated, obscure place; that on the first of May, 182–, the body of a woman had been found at low tide upon the beach, that it had the appearance of having been very long in the water—the clothing was respectable, the dress was dark blue stuff, but was faded in spots—there was a ring on the finger, but the hand was so swollen that it could not be got off. His poor neighbors of the coast assembled. They made an effort to get the coroner, but he could not be found. And the state of the body demanded immediate burial. When cross-questioned by Lawyer Romford, the witness said that they had not *then* heard of any missing or murdered lady, but had believed the body to be that of a shipwrecked passenger, until they heard of Miss Mayfield's fate.

Miriam was next recalled. She came in as before, supported between Colonel and Miss Thornton. Every one who saw the poor girl, said that she was dying. When examined, she deposed that Marian, when she left home, had worn a blue merino dress—and yes, she always wore a little locket ring on her finger. Drooping and fainting as she was, Miriam was allowed to leave the court-room. This closed the evidence of the prosecution.

The defence was taken up and conducted with a great deal of skill. Mr. Romford enlarged upon the noble character his client had ever maintained from childhood to the present time—they all knew him—he had been born and had ever lived among them—what man or woman of them all would have dared to suspect him of such a crime? he spoke warmly of his truth, fidelity, Christian zeal, benevolence, philanthropy and great public benefits.

I have no space nor time to give a fair idea of the logic and eloquence with which Mr. Romford met the charges of the state's attorney, nor the astute skill with which he tried to break down the force of the evidence for the prosecution. Then he called the witnesses for the defence. They were all warm friends of Mr. Willcoxen, all had known him from boyhood, none would believe that under any possible circumstances he could commit the crime for which he stood indicted. They testified to his well-known kindness, gentleness and benevolence—his habitual forbearance and command of temper, even under the most exasperating provocations—they swore to his generosity, fidelity and truthfulness in all the relations of life. In a word, they did the very best they could to save his life and honor—but the most they could do was very little before the force of such evidence as stood arrayed against him. And all men saw, that unless an alibi could be proved, Thurston Willcoxen was lost! Oh! for that alibi. Paul Douglass was again undergoing an awful temptation. Why, he asked himself—why should he not perjure his soul, and lose it, too, to save his brother's life and honor from fatal wrong? And if there had not been in Paul's heart a love of truth greater than his fear of hell, his affection for Thurston would have triumphed, he *would* have perjured himself.

The defence here closed. The state's attorney did not even deem it necessary to speak again, and the judge proceeded to charge the jury. They must not, he said, be blinded by the social position, clerical character, youth, talents, accomplishments or celebrity of the prisoner—with however dazzling a halo these might surround him. They must deliberate coolly upon the evidence that had been laid before them, and after due consideration of the case, if there was a doubt upon their minds, they were to let the prisoner have the full benefit of it.

Wherever there was the least uncertainty it was right to lean to the side of mercy.

The case was then given to the jury. The jury did not leave their box, but counseled together in a low voice for half-an-hour, during which a death-like silence, a suffocating atmosphere filled the court-room.

Thurston alone was calm, his soul had collected all its forces to meet the shock of whatever fate might come—honor or dishonor, life or death!

Presently the foreman of the jury arose, followed by the others.

Every heart stood still.

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon your verdict?" demanded the judge.

"Yes, your honor," responded the foreman, on the part of his colleagues.

"How say you—is the prisoner at the bar 'Guilty or Not Guilty?'"

"NOT GUILTY," cried the shrill tones of a girl, near the outer door, towards which all eyes, in astonishment and inquiry, were now turned, to see a slight female figure, in the garb of a Sister of Mercy, clinging to the arm of Cloudesley Mornington, and who was now pushing and elbowing his way through the crowd, towards the bench.

All gave way—many that were seated arose to their feet, and spoke in eager whispers, or looked over each others' heads.

"Order! silence in the court!" shouted the marshal.

"Your honor—this lady is a vitally important witness for the defence," said Cloudy, pushing his way into the presence of the judge, leaving his female companion standing before the bench, and then hurrying to the dock, where he grasped the hand of the prisoner, exclaiming, breathlessly, "Saved—Thurston! Saved!"

"Order! silence!" called out the marshal, by way of making himself agreeable—for there *was* silence in the court, where all the audience at least were more anxious to hear than to speak.

"Your honor, I move that the new witness be heard," said Mr. Romford.

"The defence is closed—the charge given to the jury, who have decided upon their verdict," answered the state's attorney.

"The verdict has not been rendered, the jury have the privilege of hearing this new witness," said the judge.

The jury were unanimous in the resolution to withhold their verdict until they *had* heard.

This being decided, the Sister of Mercy took the stand, threw aside her long, black veil, and revealed the features of Jacquelina; but so pale, weary, anxious and terrified, as to be scarcely recognizable.

The usual oath was administered.

And while Cloudy stood triumphantly by the side of Mr. Willcoxen, Jacquelina prepared to give in her evidence.

She was interrupted by a slight disturbance near the door, and the rather noisy entrance of several persons, whom the crowd, on beholding, recognized as Commodore Waugh, his wife, his niece, and his servant. Some among them seemed to insist upon being brought directly into the presence of the judge and jury—but the officer near the door pointed out to them the witness on the stand, waiting to give testimony; and on seeing her they subsided into quietness, and suffered themselves to be set aside for a while.

When this was over—a lady, plainly dressed, and close-veiled, entered, and addressed a few words to the same janitor. But the latter replied as he had to the others, by pointing to the witness on the stand. The veiled lady seemed to acquiesce, and sat down where the officer directed her.

"Order! silence in the court!" cried the marshal, not to be behindhand.

And order and silence reigned when the Sister gave in her evidence as follows:

"My name is Jacquelina L'Oiseau—not Grimshaw—for I never was the wife of Dr. Grimshaw. I do not like to speak farther of myself, yet it is necessary, to make my testimony clear. While yet a child I was contracted to Dr. Grimshaw in a civil marriage, which was never ratified. I was full of mischief in those days, and my greatest pleasure was to torment and provoke my would-be bridegroom; alas! alas! it was to that wanton spirit that all the disaster is owing. Thurston Willcoxen and Marian Mayfield were my intimate friends. On the morning of the 8th of April, 182–, they were both at Luckenough. Thurston left early. After he was gone, Marian chanced to drop a note, which I picked up and read. It was in the handwriting of Thurston Willcoxen, and it appointed a meeting with Marian upon the beach, near Pine Bluff, for that evening.

Here Mr. Romford placed in her hands the scrap of paper that had already formed such an important part of the evidence against the prisoner.

"Is that the note of which you speak?"

"Yes—that is the note. And when I picked it up the wanton spirit of mischief inspired me with the wish to use it for the torment of Dr. Grimshaw, who was easily provoked to jealousy! Oh! I never thought it would end so fatally! I affected to lose the note, and left it in his way. I saw him pick it up and read it. I felt sure he thought—as I intended he should think—it was for me. There were other circumstances also to lead him to the same conclusion. He dropped the note where he had picked it up, and pretended not to have seen it; afterwards *I* in the same way restored it to Marian. To carry on my fatal jest, I went home in the carriage with Marian, to Old Field Cottage, which stands near the coast. I left Marian there and set out to return for Luckenough—laughing all the time, alas! to think that Doctor Grimshaw had gone to the coast to intercept what he supposed to be *my* meeting with Thurston! Oh, God I never thought such jests could be so dangerous! Alas! alas! he met Marian Mayfield in the dark, and between the storm without and the storm within—the blindness of night and the blindness of rage—he stabbed her before he found out his mistake, and he rushed home with her innocent blood on his hands and clothing—rushed home and into my presence, to reproach me as the cause of his crime, to fill my bosom with undying remorse, and then to die! He had in the crisis of his passion, ruptured an artery and fell--so that the blood found upon his hands and clothing was supposed to be his own. No one knew the secret of his blood guiltiness but myself. In my illness and delirium that followed, I believe I dropped some words that made my aunt, Mrs. Waugh, and Mr. Cloudlesley Mornington, suspect something; but I never betrayed my knowledge of the dead man's unintentional crime, and would not do so now, but so save the innocent. May I now sit down?"

No! the state's attorney wanted to take her in hand, and cross-examine her, which he began to do severely, unsparingly. But as she had told the exact truth, though not in the clearest style, the more the lawyer sifted her testimony, the clearer and more evident its truthfulness and point became; until there seemed at length nothing to do but acquit the prisoner. But courts of law are proverbially fussy, and now the state's attorney was doing his best to invalidate the testimony of the last witness.

Turn we from them to the veiled lady, where she sat in her obscure corner of the room, hearing all this.

Oh! who can conceive, far less portray the joy, the unspeakable joy that filled her heart nearly to breaking! He was guiltless! Thurston, her beloved, was guiltless in intention, as he was in deed! the thought of crime had not been near his heart! his long remorse had been occasioned by what he had unintentionally made her suffer. He was all that he had lately appeared to the world! all that he had at *first* appeared to her! —faithful, truthful, constant, noble, generous!—her heart was vindicated! her love was not the madness, the folly, the weakness that her intellectual nature had often stamped it to be! Her love was vindicated, for he deserved it all! Oh! joy unspeakable—oh! joy insupportable!

She was a strong, calm, self-governing woman—not wont to be overcome by any event or any emotion—yet now her head her whole form, drooped forward, and she sank upon the low balustrade in front of her seat—weighed down by excess of happiness—happiness so absorbing, that for a time she forgot everything else; but soon she remembered that her presence was required near the bench, to put a stop to the debate between the lawyers, and she strove to quell the tumultuous excitement of her feelings, and to recover self-command before going among them.

In the meantime, near the bench, the counsel for the prisoner had succeeded in establishing the validity of the challenged testimony, and the case was once more about to be recommitted to the jury, when the lady, who had been quietly making her way through the crowd towards the bench, stood immediately in front of the judge, raised her veil, and Marian Mayfield stood revealed.

With a loud cry the prisoner sprang upon his feet; but was immediately captured by two officers, who fancied he was about to escape.

Marian did not speak one word, she could not do so, nor was it necessary—there she stood alive among them—they all knew her—the judge, the officers, the lawyers, the audience—there she stood alive among them—it was enough!

The audience arose in a mass, and "Marian!" "Marian Mayfield!" was the general exclamation, as all pressed towards the new comer.

Jacquelina, stunned with the too sudden joy, swooned in the arms of Cloudy, who, between surprise and delight, had nearly lost his own senses.

The people pressed around Marian, with exclamations and inquiries.

The marshal forgot to be disorderly with vociferations of "order!" and stood among the rest, agape for news.

Marian recovered her voice and spoke:—

"I am not here to give any information; what explanation I have to make is due first of all to Mr. Willcoxen, who has the right to claim it of me when he pleases," and turning around, she moved towards the dock, raising her eyes to Thurston's face, and offering her hand.

How he met that look—how he clasped that hand—need not be said—their hearts were too full for speech.

The tumult in the court-room was at length subdued by the rising of the judge to make a speech—a very brief one—

"Mr. Willcoxen is discharged, and the court adjourned," and then the judge came down from his seat, and the officers cried, "make way for the court to pass." And the way was made. The judge came up to to the group, and shook hands first with Mr. Willcoxen, whom he earnestly congratulated, and then with Marian, who was an old and esteemed acquaintance, and so bowing gravely, he passed out.

Still the crowd pressed on, and among them came Commodore Waugh and his family, for whom way was immediately made.

Mrs. Waugh wept and smiled, and exclaimed: "Oh! Hebe! Oh! Lapwing!"

The Commodore growled out certain inarticulate anathemas, which he intended should be taken as congratulations, since the people seemed to expect it of him.

And Mary L'Oiseau pulled down her mouth, cast up her eyes, and crossed herself when she saw the consecrated hand of Sister Theresa clasped in that of Cloudy!

But Thurston's high spirit could not brook this scene an instant longer. And love as well as pride required its speedy close. Marian was resting on his arm—he felt the clasp of her dear hand—he saw her living face—the angel brow—the clear eyes—the rich auburn tresses, rippling around the blooming cheek—he heard her dulcet tones—yet—it seemed too like a dream!—he needed to realize this happiness.

"Friends," he said, "I thank you for the interest you show in us. For those whose faith in me remained unshaken in my darkest hour, I find no words good enough to express what I shall ever feel. But you must all know how exhausting this day has been, and how needful repose is"—his eyes here fell fondly and proudly upon Marian—"to this lady on my arm. After to-morrow we shall be happy to see any of our friends at Dell-Delight." And bowing slightly from right to left, he led his Marian through the opening crowd.

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CHAPTER XLVI.

REUNION.

> "O! my soul's joy!
> If after every tempest come such calms!
> My soul hath her content so absolute,
> That not another comfort like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate."—*Shakspeare.*

WHO shall follow them, or intrude on the sacredness of their reconciliation, or relate with what broken tones, and frequent stops and tears and smiles, and clinging embraces, their mutual explanations were made?

At last Marian, raising her head from his shoulder, said,

"But I come to you a bankrupt, dear Thurston! I have inherited and expended a large fortune since we parted—and now I am more than penniless, for I stand responsible for large sums of money owed by my 'Orphans' Home' and 'Emigrants' Help'—money that I had intended to raise by subscription."

"Now, I thank God abundantly for the wealth that He has given me. Your fortune, dearest Marian, has been nobly appropriated—and for the rest, it is my blessed privilege to assume all your responsibilities—and I rejoice that they are great! for, sweetest wife, and fairest lady, I feel that I never can sufficiently prove how much I love and reverence you—how much I would and ought to sacrifice for you!"

"And even now, dear Thurston, I came hither, bound on a mission to the western prairies, to find a suitable piece of land for a colony of emigrants."

"I know it, fairest and dearest lady, I know it all. I will lift that burden from your shoulders, too, and all liabilities of yours do I assume—oh! my dear Marian! with how much joy! and I will labor with and for you, until all your responsibilities of every sort are discharged, and my liege lady is free to live her own life!"

This scene took place in the private parlor of the hotel, while Paul Douglass was gone to Colonel Thornton's lodgings, to carry the glad tidings to Miriam, and also to procure a carriage for the conveyance of the whole party to Dell-Delight.

He returned at last, accompanied by Miriam, whom he tenderly conducted into the room, and who, passing by all others, tottered forward, and sank, weeping, at the feet of Mr. Willcoxen, and clasping his knees, still wept, as if her heart would break.

Thurston stooped and raised her, pressed the kiss of forgiveness on her young brow, and then whispering,

"Miriam, have you forgotten that there is another here who claims your attention?" took her by the hand, and led her to Marian.

The young girl was shy and silent, but Marian drew her to her bosom, saying,

"Has my 'baby' forgotten me? And so, you would have been an avenger, Miriam. Remember, all your life, dear child, that such an office is never to be assumed by an erring human creature. 'Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord.'" And kissing Miriam fondly, she resigned her to Paul's care, and turned, and gave her own hand to Thurston, who conducted her to the carriage, and then returned for little Angel, who all this time had sat demurely in a little parlor chair.

They were followed by Paul and Miriam, and so set forth for Dell-Delight.

But little more remains to be told.

Thurston resigned his pastoral charge of the village church; settled up his business in the neighborhood; procured a discreet woman to keep house at Dell-Delight; left Paul, Miriam and poor Fanny in her care, and set out with Marian, on their western journey, to select the site for the settlement of her emigrant protegès. After successfully accomplishing this mission, they returned east, and embarked for Liverpool, and thence to London, where Marian dissolved her connection with the "Emigrant's Help," and bade adieu to her "Orphans' Home." Thurston made large donations to both these institutions. And Marian saw that her place was well supplied to the "Orphans' Home" by another competent woman. Then they returned to America. Their travels had occupied more than twelve months. And their expenses, of all sorts, had absorbed more than a third of Mr. Willcoxen's princely fortune—yet with what joy was it lavished by his hand, who felt he could not do too much for his priceless Marian.

On their return home, a heartfelt gratification met them—it was that the parish had shown their undiminished confidence in Mr. Willcoxen, and their high appreciation of his services, by keeping his pulpit open for him. And a few days after his settlement at home, a delegation of the vestry waited upon him, to solicit his acceptance of the ministry. And after talking with his "liege lady," as he fondly and proudly termed Marian, Mr. Willcoxen was well pleased to return a favorable answer.

And in a day or two Thurston and Marian were called upon to give decision in another cause, to wit:—

Jacquelina had not returned to Bethlehem, nor renewed her vows; but had doffed her nun's habit for a young lady's dress and remained at Luckenough. Cloudy had not failed to push his suit with all his might. But Jacquelina still hesitated—she did not know, she said, but she thought she had no right to be happy, as other people had, she had caused so much trouble in the world, she reckoned she had better go back to her convent.

"And because you unintentionally occasioned some sorrow, now happily over, to some people, you would atone for the fault by adding one more to the list of victims, and making *me* miserable Bad logic, Lina, and worse religion."

Jacquelina did not know—she could not decide—after so many grave errors, she was afraid to trust herself. The matter was then referred—of all men in the world, to the—Commodore, who graciously replied, that they might all go to the demon for *him*. But as Cloudy and Lina had no especial business with his Satanic Majesty, they declined to avail themselves of the permission, and consulted Mrs. Waugh, whose deep, mellow laugh preceded her answer, when she said,

"Take heart, Lapwing! take heart, and all the happiness you can possibly get! I have lived a long time, and seen a great many people, good and bad, and though I have sometimes met people who were not so happy as they merited—yet I never have seen any one happier than they deserved to be! and that they cannot be so, seems to be a law of nature that ought to reconcile us very much to the apparent flourishing of the wicked."

But Mrs. L'Oiseau warned her daughter not to trust to "Aunty," who was so good natured, and altogether such a misguided woman, that if she had her will she would do away with all punishment—yes, even with Satan and purgatory! But Jacquelina had much less confidence in Mrs. L'Oiseau than in Mrs. Waugh; and so she told Cloudy, who thought that he had waited already quite long enough, to wait until Marian and Thurston came home, and if *they* thought it would be right for her to be happy—why—then—maybe—she might be! But the matter must be referred to them.

And now it was referred to them, by the sorely tried Cloudy. And they gave Jacquelina leave to be "happy." And she *was* happy! And as for Cloudy, poor, constant fellow! he was so overjoyed, that he declared he would petition the Legislature to change his name as no longer appropriate, for though his morning had been cloudy enough, his day was going to be a very bright one!

When Mrs. L'Oiseau heard of this engagement, she crossed herself, and told her beads, and vowed that the world was growing so wicked, that she could no longer live in it. And she commenced preparations to retire to a convent, to which in fact she soon after went, and where, in strict truth, she was likely to be much happier than her nature would permit her to be elsewhere.

Cloudy and Lina were very quietly married, and took up their abode at the pleasant farm-house of Locust Hill, which was repaired and refurnished for their reception. But if the leopard cannot change his spots, nor the Ethiope his skin—neither can the fairy permanently change her nature; for no sooner was Jacko's happiness secured, than the elfish spirit, the lightest part of her nature, effervesced to the top—for the torment of Cloudy. Jacko and Cloudy even had one quarrel—it was upon the first occasion after their marriage, of his leaving her to join his ship—and when the whilome sister of charity drove Cloudy nearly frantic by insisting—whether in jest or earnest no one on earth could tell—upon donning the little middy's uniform and going with him! However, the quarrel happily was never renewed, for before the next time of sailing, there appeared a certain tiny Cloudy at home, that made the land quite as dear as the sea to its mother. And this little imp became Mrs. Waugh's especial pet. And if Jacquelina did not train the little scion very straight, at least she did not twist him awry. And she even tried, in her fitful capricious way, to reform her own manners, that she might form those of her little children. And Mrs. Waugh and dear Marian aided her and encouraged her in her uncertain efforts.

About this time, Paul and Miriam were united, and went to housekeeping in the pretty villa built for them upon the site of Old Field Cottage by Thurston, and furnished for them by Mrs. Waugh.

And a very pleasant country neighborhood they formed—these three young families—of Dell-Delight, Locust Hill, and the villa.

Two other important events occurred in their social circle—first, poor harmless Fanny passed smilingly to her heavenly home, and all thought it very well.

And one night Commodore Waugh, after eating a good hearty supper, was comfortably tucked up in bed, and went into a sound, deep sleep from which he never more awoke. May he rest in peace. But do you think Mrs. Waugh did not cry about it for two weeks, and ever after speak of him as the poor, dear Commodore?

But Henrietta was of too healthful a nature to break her heart for the loss of a very good man, and it was not likely she was going to do so for the missing of a very uncomfortable one; and so in a week or two more her happy spirits returned, and she began to realize to what freedom, ease, and cheerfulness she had fallen heir! Now she could live and breathe, and go and come without molestation. Now when she wished to open her generous heart to the claims of affection in the way of helping "Lapwing" or Miriam, who were neither of them very rich—or to the greater claims of humanity in the relief of the suffering poor, or the pardon of delinquent servants, she could do so to her utmost content, and without having to accompany her kind act with a deep sigh at the anticipation of the parlor storm it would raise at home. And though Mrs. Henrietta still "waxed fat," her good flesh was no longer an incumbrance to her—the leaven of cheerfulness lightened the whole mass.

Mrs. Waugh had brought her old maid Jenny back. Jenny had begged to come home to "old mistess," for she said it was "'stonishin' how age-able," she felt, though nobody might believe it, she was "gettin' oler and oler, ebery singly day" of her life, and she wanted to end her days "'long o' ole mistess."

Old mistress was rich and good, and Luckenough was a quiet, comfortable home, where the old maid was very sure of being lodged, boarded, and clothed almost as well as old mistress herself—not that these selfish considerations entered largely into Jenny's mind, for she really loved Mrs. Henrietta.

And old mistress and old maid were never happier than on some fine, clear day, when seated on their two old mules, they ambled along through forest and over field, to spend a day with "Lapwing" or with "Hebe"—or perhaps with the "Pigeon Pair," as they called the new married couple at the villa.

Yes! there was a time when Mrs. Henrietta was happier still! It was, when upon some birthday or other festival, she would gather *all* the young families—Thurston and Hebe, Cloudy and Lapwing, the Pigeons, and all the babies, in the big parlor of Luckenough, and sit surrounded by a flock of tiny lapwings, hebes and pigeons, forming a group that our fairy saucily called, "The old hen and chickens."

And what shall we say in taking leave of Thurston and Marian? He had had some faults, as you have seen—but the conquering of faults is the noblest conquest, and he had achieved such a victory. He called Marian the angel of his salvation. Year by year their affection deepened and strengthened, and drew them closer in heart and soul and purpose. From their home as from a centre emanated a healthful, beneficent and elevating influence, happily felt through all their social circle. A lovely family grew around them—and among the beautiful children, none were more tenderly nursed or carefully trained, than the little waif Angel. And in all the pleasant country neighborhood, the sweetest and the happiest home is that of Dell-Delight.

Good! Good!! Good!!!

Good! Good!! Good!!!

THE END.

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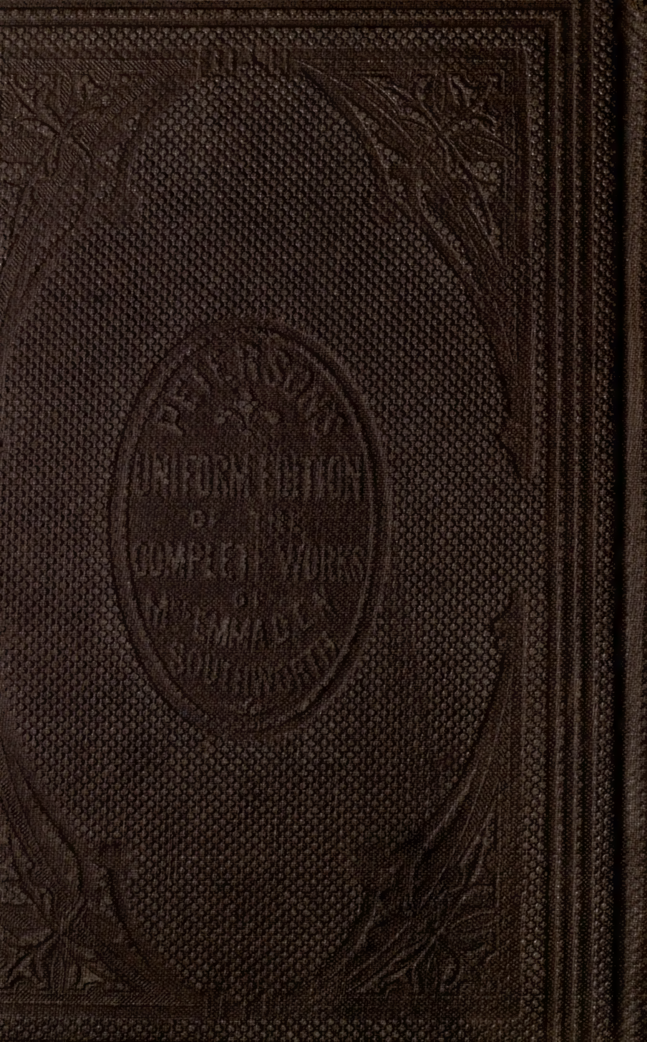
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